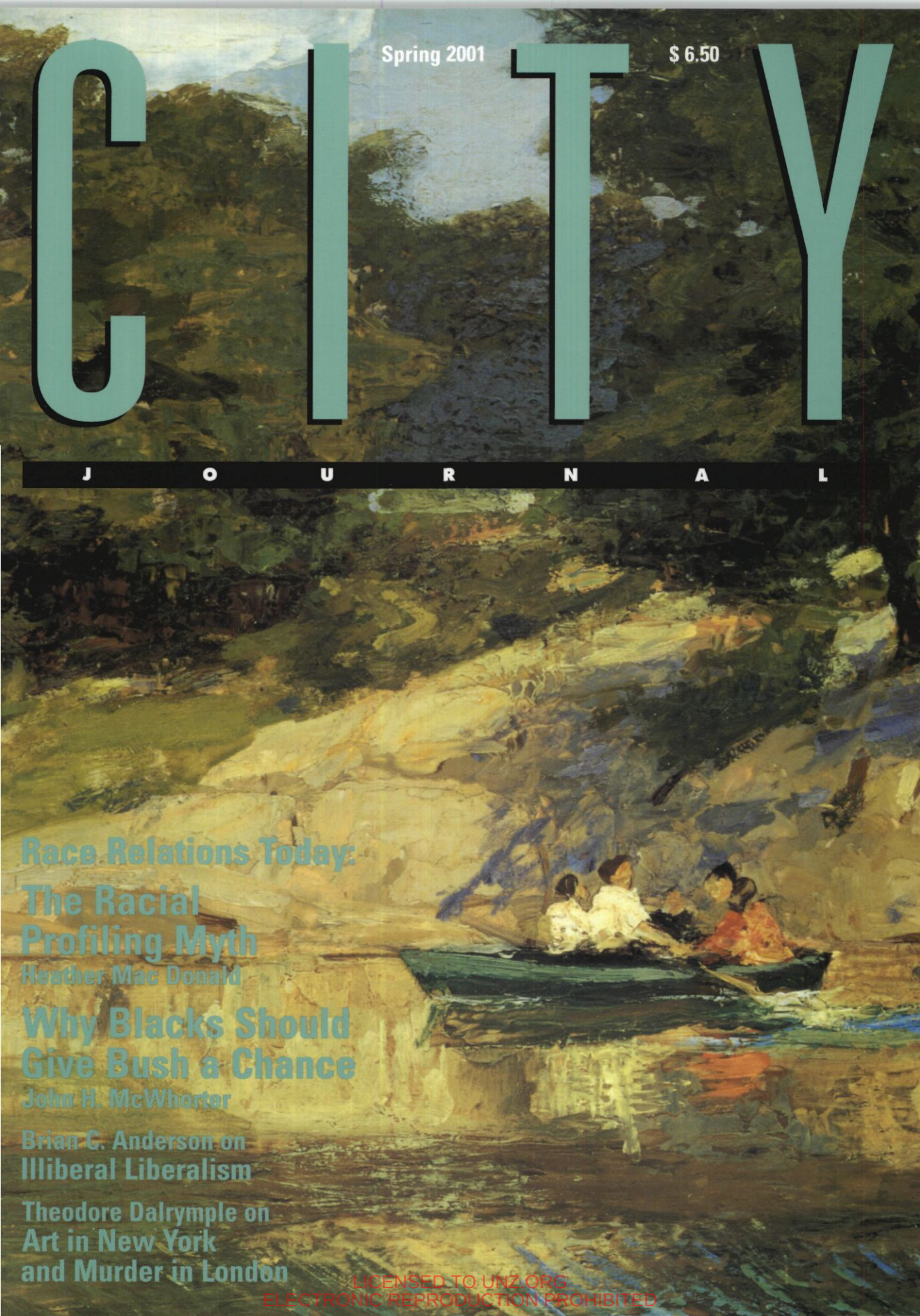

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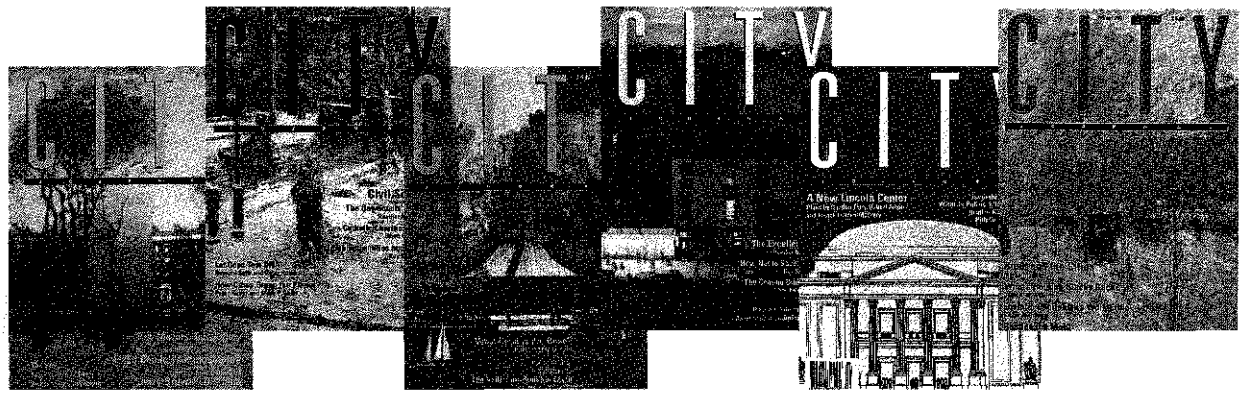

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In Prospect

As five of this issue's stories make clear, American race relations stand at an odd crossroads today. Read the newspaper front pages, with their daily reports about racial profiling and the related trials and hearings now under way in New Jersey, and you'd think we were back in the America of Bull Connor and George Wallace, with ubiquitous racism constricting and embittering the lives of most black citizens in the nation. Here, the reports would have us believe, are state troopers, armed with government authority, in effect hunting down blacks if they have the temerity to drive on the public highways. But, as Heather Mac Donald shows in her story on page 14, there's not a shred of credible evidence whatsoever that any such thing as racial profiling exists. What *is* certain is that the anti-profiling crusade threatens one of the greatest benefits that the law-abiding majority of inner-city blacks has gained over the last decade: the activist policing that has reduced crime in their neighborhoods by staggering percentages, making inner-city communities livable once again. What's also certain is that the anti-profiling agitation is stoking up blacks' sense of grievance alarmingly.

That black rancor should be heading up toward the boiling point just at this moment doesn't quite make sense, though, observes John H. McWhorter in "Why Blacks Should Give Bush a Chance" (page 28). With racism rare and getting rarer, the objective situation of black Americans, he argues, is better now than at any time in the past, and their future prospects are even more promising. The new administration of George W. Bush envisions education reforms that stand a chance of actually helping inner-city black kids significantly, and the Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives stresses a build-up of exactly the kind of human capital inner-city blacks need in order to take control of their own lives and their own communities. The new administration has even appointed a constellation of distinguished and accomplished blacks to high government posts. But the established black leadership, unable to take yes for an answer, is struggling hard to snatch defeat from the jaws of victory, arguing all the more fiercely for the kind of government handouts that keep blacks dependent. What African-Americans need, McWhorter suggests, are leaders who, like those of the past, stress independence and self-reliance. To join the ranks of those new leaders, *City Journal* nominates contributing editor McWhorter.

As graying black leaders like Jesse Jackson and Al Sharpton cling all the more closely to the Democratic party, the Democrats and others on the left-liberal side of the political divide cling all the more closely to the old leftist shibboleths about race and other matters, as Brian C. Anderson observes in "Illiberal Liberalism" (page 42)—and instead of arguing their positions reasonably and civilly against conservative opponents, they've taken increasingly to debate by invective and name-calling. As a result, "racist" has become for them the term of global dismissal that "fascist" was for the 1960s' radicals. This is not, Anderson judges, the kind of debate that the Founders hoped to promote in the liberal democracy they created; and it makes one wonder whether, under all the bluster, today's left has much to offer in the way of ideas.

The liberal left's readiness to find racism everywhere adds its own measure of fuel to blacks' sense of grievance, of course. And with blacks' feelings in such an inflamed state, what New York Police Commissioner Bernard B. Kerik has to say in this issue's Diarist on page 120 is all the more important. New York cops are not racist, Kerik says; but they *can* be rude and arrogant—sometimes insufferably so, as almost every New Yorker can attest with an experience of his own or of a friend. But even though New York's Finest, when rude, are indiscriminately rude—theirs is an equal opportunity arrogance—the sensibilities of black New Yorkers, already rubbed raw, easily mistake the rudeness for racism. All the more reason, Kerik says, to make sure, as he intends to do, that his cops treat the citizens of every color who pay their salary with the respect they are due.

When racial sensitivity among both blacks and whites reaches so fevered a pitch, terrible, even fatal, consequences can result, as Theodore Dalrymple recounts in the current installment of his unfailingly absorbing column, "Oh, to be in England" (page 112). The alternative, Dalrymple suggests, would be for everyone simply to do his best on a case-by-case basis, without racial consciousness—a modest but revolutionary approach to which Mac Donald, McWhorter, and *City Journal* in general would heartily say, Amen. ■

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Soundings

Tort Trauma

With premiums skyrocketing, the pressure grows for real tort reform.

New York is in the midst of a litigation explosion that's blasting state insurance premiums through the roof. New York motorists, for example, will soon be paying an average of $1,100 a year for auto insurance, the highest rate in the nation, 40 percent above the U.S. average. The chief culprit: the state's crazy accident-insurance law, which lets drivers involved in a crash wait up to six months to file medical claims. The law invites the unscrupulous to try to pull off premium-spiking insurance scams, since the more time that elapses between a purported accident and a medical claim, the harder it is for an insurer to investigate fraud. As neighboring states have cracked down on such fraud, while New York's reform efforts have failed, the state has become a magnet for scammers: since 1995, proven fraudulent claims have nearly tripled, to more than 12,000 last year.

New York's building contractors suffered woes too. The state's labor law, unlike any other state in the U.S., lets a worker injured on a construction job collect workers' compensation while at the same time suing the owner or general contractor of the building site where he got hurt—a chance for double indemnity, so to speak. Also unique in the nation, New York law places an absolute liability on builders for on-site accidents, even if a worker hurt himself doing something stupid, like getting drunk and then operating heavy machinery on the job. Not surprisingly, premiums have spun out of control: contractors who once paid yearly premiums of $100,000 are seeing new rates as high as $350,000. Many fed-up insurers are dropping coverage for Empire State builders entirely.

New York's medical doctors face their own insurance ills. Malpractice awards, unrestrained by caps like those that many other states have enacted, have soared to an average of $4.5 million, compared with $1.7 million nationally. For almost two decades, the doctors insulated themselves from these big awards by dipping into a special state fund, created in response to a previous malpractice crisis, that let them buy extra insurance coverage at publicly subsidized low rates. But Governor Pataki let the law authorizing the fund expire, so doctors soon will have to pay full price—twice what California doctors pay—if they want the added protection.

The reason New York's tort laws haven't been reformed is the power of the state's trial bar, which has used its political influence in the State Legislature to block award caps and other reforms, like cutting down on the maximum time allowed for making auto insurance claims. But the growing fallout from rising insurance costs may be shaking things up enough in Albany for real tort reform to happen. Last year, Pataki announced that he'd allow no changes in the state's litigation laws without comprehensive tort reform, and he vetoed trial-lawyer-supported legislation that sought to lift caps on lawyers' fees in medical malpractice cases. These two moves, together with some grumbling from normally pliant state legislators, brought the trial lawyers running to the negotiation table, waving a tort-reform package.

Predictably, the proposal favors the trial lawyers' interests: it rejects the idea of limiting awards and would instead extend a liability fund like the one that protected doctors to other constituencies facing spiraling insurance premiums, sticking citizens with the cost. But as one business lobbyist says, "They must be running scared, or they would never even be willing to sit down and talk." Now would be an ideal time to push hard for true reform.

—Steven Malanga

More Columbines?

Experts say that schools are getting safer. They're wrong.

After 15-year-old Charles "Andy" Williams killed two classmates and wounded 13 other people in a shooting spree at Santana High School in Santee, California, in early March, experts were quick to remind the public that, statistically, school violence is on the wane. Though polls showed that 70 percent of American parents believed that a shooting could happen in their own kids' schools, Mom and Dad had just succumbed to the media hysteria that invariably surrounds such crimes—or so the experts said. As it turns out, however, the parents may be closer to the truth.

In fact, there's good reason to think that the recent decline in school violence might have more to do

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with students being quicker to report suspicious classmates than any lack of budding Klebolds and Harrises. In Santana's aftermath, a raft of students from all over the geographical and sociological map threatened to follow Williams's footsteps. Some of these kids, like the fifth-grader who warned that he was going to bring a gun to his Deltona, Florida, elementary school, may have been harmless braggarts. But others were deadly serious. At Twentynine Palms, California—ironically, the desert community where Andy Williams lived until moving to Santee six months before the shooting—police nabbed two high school kids with a .22-caliber rifle and a hit list of 16 students. And in El Cajon, California, just seven miles from Santee, an 18-year-old loner known as "the Rock" for his intimidating physique nearly succeeded in killing some of his classmates, opening fire with a shotgun in his high school, wounding three students and two teachers before the police stopped him.

BRUCE DAVIDSON/MAGNUM PHOTOS

It's tempting to chalk up these and other post-Santana incidents to copy-cat behavior. But what about five near-misses in the six weeks *before* Santana, none of which received national press coverage at the time? In those cases, the potential for carnage was huge: police discovered guns, bombs, hit lists, and school floor plans in the homes of the student suspects.

Several recent reports confirm that despite the rosy statistics on student violence, schools have become environments likely to incubate future violence, especially if, as seems clear in the Santee case, bullying by other students plays some significant role in the making of school shooters. One study showed that nearly two-thirds of Texas public school teachers thought that teacher morale was worsening in their schools, and 40 percent of them cited "student attitudes and behavior" as the principal reason. "There are no serious consequences for bad behavior, vulgar language, or rude treatment of teachers by students," one teacher lamented. "The students run our school," another wrote.

Even more disturbing, the Connecticut Department of Education released a summary of disciplinary offenses in its public schools that included 2,000 or so first-graders, kindergartners, and even preschoolers. Zero-tolerance policies run amok? Not necessarily. Jeanne Milstein, child advocate for the State of Connecticut, says that her office has received numerous reports about "out of control" tots chronically hitting, biting, and throwing things in inner-city and suburban schools. Though there's little solid data, Kristie Kauerz, an official at the Education Commission of the States, claims that there's enough anecdotal evidence to conclude that a growing number of unmanageable babes is now a nationwide trend.

It's true that kids who shoot up their schools, troubled as they are, often have no history of serious discipline problems. But there's a relationship between school disorder and student violence nonetheless. When adults fail to create a safe and civil school environment, where they're in charge, students take over, creating a bullying, ruthlessly competitive school culture in its place. In such a disorderly environment, troubled kids are likely to become more troubled—just like Andy Williams.

The adults' failure largely stems from numerous court decisions that have made it hard for educators to enforce discipline (see "Who Killed School Discipline?" Spring 2000). But recently, the U.S. Supreme Court let stand a federal appellate court decision upholding the power of an Ohio high school to prevent a student from wearing an offensive tee-shirt that featured shock-rocker Marilyn Manson. Maybe the courts have begun to grasp that adults need to be in charge in the schools.

—*Kay S. Hymowitz*

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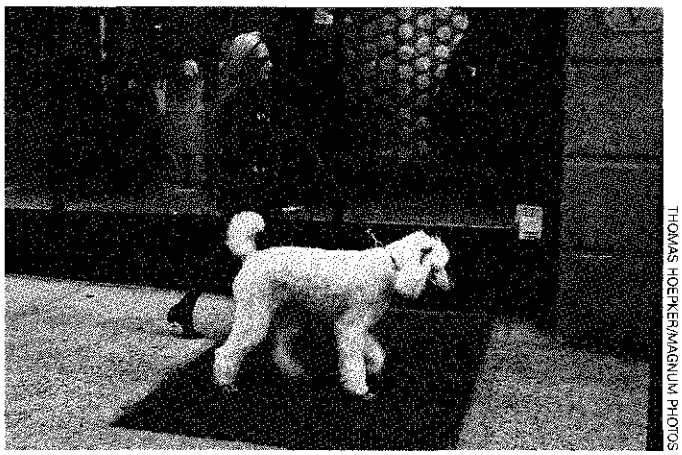
Soundings

Marriott Morality

The famous hotel chain woos "Mr. and Mrs. Smith" for a quickie.

Marriott Hotels should be ashamed of its new ad campaign. The giant chain's artfully done posters, seemingly on every commuter rail car in the New York area, depict an attractive 20-something couple—the woman looking perhaps a bit younger because of her undergraduate-style backpack purse—in a sexy embrace. The young man leans over, touching his forehead to hers. Both smile broadly, staring mischievously in each other's eyes and pressing pelvises together. No wedding bands.



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The poster's opening line reads: "We've spent the last six months thinking about your love life." Then this paragraph: "At Marriott, we put a lot of time into creating a weekend for falling in love. With so many Marriotts to choose from, you can easily say, love is just around the corner." Contact information follows to help you reserve your exciting weekend.

In other words: come on down, young unmarried and uncommitted couples, have sex in our comfy rooms, and you might—*might*—fall in love. No need to feel furtive. We welcome your business.

Sure, advertising often uses sex to sell, but this ad comes uncomfortably close to selling sex. In an era when the sexual revolution's devastating consequences in broken families and fatherless kids have become numbingly familiar, Marriott has defined dalliance down.

—Peter Reinharz

Skyscraping Realty Taxes

Gotham's rates—the highest in the nation—drive businesses out of town.

Everybody knows that former president Bill Clinton dropped his plans to rent tony office space in midtown Manhattan because of public outrage over the high cost of the digs, and that he's set up shop in less pricey Harlem instead. But if Clinton had succeeded in moving into Carnegie Tower on 57th Street, not only would U.S. taxpayers be picking up the tab for the fancy new headquarters, they'd be subsidizing New York City's business-killing real-estate taxes, too.

Real estate taxes would have made up about $65,000 of the proposed $750,000 rent at Carnegie Tower—including an estimated $26,000 to pay the city's commercial occupancy tax, the only levy on rent in any city in the nation. Because Carnegie Tower was built with tax incentives to spur West Side development, this is about half the tax that an average 57th Street office that size would pay—which explains why the annual real-estate taxes on Clinton's wife's $514,000-a-year new Senate offices in Manhattan are also about $65,000. By contrast, if Clinton wanted to rent similar space in, say, booming downtown Atlanta, his total real-estate taxes would be around $22,000 a year—66 percent less. If he moved to Los Angeles, nearer to his Hollywood pals, the bill would be even a little cheaper. Up in Harlem, where the commercial rent tax no longer applies, the real-estate taxes on Clinton's space will be around $17,000.

Even for a relatively small space like Clinton's, the numbers are striking. But for big companies that need lots of room, the numbers are truly mind-boggling. A 500,000-square-foot lease on 57th Street would at current rates require a staggering $7 million a year in property taxes, compared with just $1.35 million in L.A. or Atlanta—a difference of more than $5 million a year that goes straight to a firm's bottom line. Big companies that understandably balk at such huge sums don't move to Harlem, where there's little of the Class A office space they need. Instead, they move to less expensive cities. The real price that New York pays for its inflated real-estate taxes is lost business.

—Steven Malanga

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Dems to Poor Kids: Get Lost

New York's Democrats mean to kill an education tax credit that would help poor families.

Since Albany Democrats claim to be the party of educational equity, why aren't they lining up to support upstate Republican assemblyman John Faso's innovative education tax-credit bill? Under the assembly minority leader's bill, families with adjusted gross incomes of less than $40,000 get a tax credit of either $1,500 (if they've got one school-age kid) or $3,000 (if they've got more), which they can apply toward almost any legitimate educational service or product. Families too poor to pay any income tax would get a check in the mail for the entire credit. For families earning more than $40,000, the credit progressively shrinks, until it phases out entirely at $100,000. The credit's good for kids enrolled in public and private schools and even for home schoolers.

To appreciate the subsidy's potential boon to poor kids, consider a single mother earning $34,000, with two children in a crummy city public school. Fed up with public school, she could use her $3,000 to help send her children to Catholic school, where, a recent study by education expert Ray Damonico has conclusively shown, kids perform much better on standardized tests, despite bigger classes and much lower per-pupil spending. Or if she thinks her kids just need some extra help, she could use $1,000 to buy a computer for them and spend the other $2,000 on tutoring sessions or on an SAT prep course.

For believers in equal educational opportunity, the plan is a winner. Also in the bill's favor, critics can't attack it constitutionally, in the way voucher programs have come under fire. Similar tax-credit programs in Arizona, Iowa, and Minnesota have all withstood legal challenges.

Unfortunately, New York's assembly Democrats, especially those from New York City, oppose the bill. After all, the money it authorizes would bypass the city's dysfunctional education bureaucracy and go right into poor parents' hands—anathema to a public education establishment that fears any loss of control over education dollars. Teachers' union lobbyists have complained to key assembly Democrats, who've obligingly bottled up the bill in the Ways and Means Committee. Committee chairman Herman "Denny" Farrell, a Harlem Democrat, represents lots of frustrated parents who have kids trapped in bad public schools and who lack the resources to help them. How long will it take before those parents realize the extent of Farrell's and his fellow Democrats' betrayal of their children's interests?

—Sol Stern

Liberating the Airports

The mayor's bid to wrest control of JFK and LaGuardia makes sense.

Anyone who uses New York's JFK and LaGuardia airports is depressingly aware of why airline passengers consistently rank them among the world's worst. No wonder that passenger traffic at the two facilities has grown only moderately during the current economic boom, while employment has actually declined at JFK and barely increased at LaGuardia—even as jobs and passenger traffic at Newark and other airports around the country are booming.

In March, Mayor Giuliani blasted the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey—the bi-state agency that has operated the airports since 1947—for the failings; and he advanced a plan to have the city take over the two facilities by forming a new agency, the Airport Improvement Corporation. Acutely aware that his term will expire long before the airport leases do, the mayor is trying to build political momentum now for a city takeover. Those vying to succeed Giuliani should embrace his plan; the city's economic future may depend on it.

The airports are the Port Authority's cash cows. Together they have thrown off more than $125 million in profits in each of the last five years—without which the Authority would have lost money in all but one of those years. The airports have helped subsidize big losses—collectively more than $200 million a year—on the PATH trains and the Authority's bus terminal, both of which primarily serve New Jersey commuters.

The JFK and LaGuardia profits have also helped subsidize improvements at Newark Airport, also run by the Port Authority. In the current fiscal year, for instance, Newark is getting $314 million in new spending, compared to $58 million at LaGuardia and $107 million at JFK. The city's current deal with

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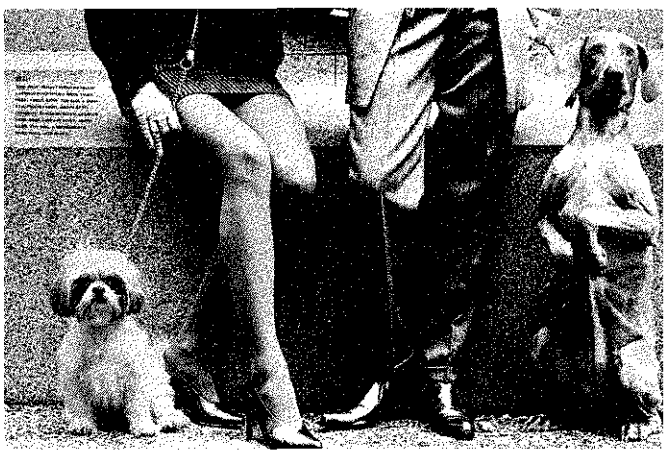
the agency is so bad that whatever money the Port Authority invests in the New York airports is deducted from the rent that the Port Authority pays to the city, which is the actual owner of LaGuardia and JFK. In 1990, the Authority paid the city $54 million in rent. But this year, with more spending taking place, it will pay only about $19 million.

Any way one looks at this, the current situation is a bad deal for New York. The airports have clearly suffered from a lack of investment, poor planning, and the Authority's decision to concentrate much of the regional growth in air traffic over the last decade at Newark Airport. Not only have the profits of the city's airports been used to spur their cross-Hudson rival, instead of to improve their own competitive appeal, these profits have funded various of the Port Authority's state-capitalist projects that have nothing to do with its central transportation mission, including its forays into real estate.



ELLIOTT ERWITT/MAGNUM PHOTOS

The Authority, run as it is by two states, will never be in a position to decide what is best for New York City. And, as the mayor points out, the agency is a powerful political lobbying machine, a "conglomerate that serves no master."

The mayor's plan involves folding seven city agencies that currently have some involvement with the airports into a single entity that would begin working on a master plan for JFK and LaGuardia and would audit the Port Authority's performance over the remaining 14 years of its lease. As part of the plan, BAA-USA, which manages such well-run airports as London's Heathrow, and which last year won a city-run competition to operate the airports when the Port Authority's lease is up, would sign a consulting contract with the new airport improvement agency to help it design a long-term strategy.

Gotham always seems to be the loser where the Port Authority is concerned. Take the Authority's recent attempt to privatize the World Trade Center, its most spectacular real-estate distraction, after six years of trying, by leasing it for 99 years. In its failed deal with developer Steven Roth, the agency agreed that the formerly tax-exempt monument to state capitalism would return only in part to the city's tax rolls, and that the Authority itself would pay a substantial portion of whatever the tax burden might be. So not only does the city fail to get its full tax payments, but it must watch the profits from its airports in effect go to subsidize whatever payments it does receive—adding insult to injury.

Fortunately, the bum deal with Roth fell through. At press time, the Port Authority was negotiating to lease the WTC to developer Larry Silverstein. One can only hope the property tax subsidy is not part of any deal. That's $70 million a year that could be going—as it should—to improve New York's dreadful airports.

—Steven Malanga

Flat-Earth Textbooks

Middle schools are using science textbooks riddled with errors.

A new study financed by the Packard Foundation shows that 12 of the most commonly used middle-school textbooks in the physical sciences—an estimated 85 percent of middle-school students use at least one of them—are pockmarked with mistakes. None of the dozen, the study found, met a reasonable standard for accuracy.

Some mistakes are whoppers. One textbook defines Newton's first law of motion by equating speed with velocity (which is speed *and* its direction). Another depicts the equator running through Texas, a hot state but not that hot. A third explains that fish maintain the same position in water by filling and emptying a special air bladder in their bodies—pure fabrication. Other boners include amusing production

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foul-ups, like the photo of singer Linda Ronstadt labeled "a silicon crystal doped with arsenic impurity."

The study's director, North Carolina State University physics professor John L. Hubisz, notes that teachers often don't have the requisite scientific background to catch these serious errors. Other recent studies have found similar problems in biology and history textbooks.

More money is all that's needed to fix the schools? Not when it's spent, as all too often, on junk like this.

—Brian C. Anderson

Affirmative Looting

An affirmative-action demo turns to farce.

In the spring on college campuses these days, a young man's fancy lightly turns to thoughts of . . . protest. And so, in early March, from the University of California at Berkeley—the mother church of student protest—came this headline: MELEE ERUPTS AT AFFIRMATIVE ACTION RALLY. At least one student was seriously injured.

The University dropped its affirmative action policy back in 1995, and California voters upheld the ban in a referendum later that year. Ever since, leftish malcontents have taken every opportunity to condemn the iniquity of holding all applicants for admission to the same standards. What they want instead is something G. K. Chesterton skewered as "the false idea of progress": the notion that, rather than trying to pass the test, you change the test.

At Berkeley, some 2,000 high-school students were bussed in for the fun, many with their teachers' blessing. It was supposed to be part of their civics education—though I doubt that Bay Area high schools will be bussing their students to the next right-to-life or anti-bilingual-ed rally. The only real civics lesson is a liberal civics lesson.

The high schoolers joined the usual assortment of faculty and students at the protest. According to one protester—a member of the student government's Defend Affirmative Action Party—"The rally will be a declaration of the new civil rights movement. We intend to fight for equality and integration throughout society, including for women of all races."

As it turned out "race" was the *mot juste*, for, after listening to a few speeches, a group of about 100 high-school students sprinted into an Athlete's Foot shoe store and started looting running shoes. As the journalist Andrew Sullivan observed, "It seems the students want affirmative action, women's rights, aid for East Timor, and a pair of those really cool new sneakers." Sullivan recalled a popular parody of the 1992 Los Angeles riots: L.A. RIOTERS DEMAND JUSTICE, TAPE DECKS, ran the headline.

Yesterday's parody becomes today's reality. The students-for-sneakers skirmish began on Berkeley's Sproul Plaza—the exact spot that saw the birth of the Free Speech Movement and its riots back in 1964, at the start of a generation of irresponsible student activism. Marx once cannily observed that history repeats itself twice, first as tragedy, then as farce. He didn't foresee, though, that the farce would become a permanent fixture in our cultural life.

—Roger Kimball

W.'s Gift to New York

The president's proposed tax cut is a boon for New York.

New York's top congressional Democrats have given President Bush's ambitious plan for an across-the board tax cut a chilly reception. Senator Hillary Clinton warned that it "could derail the nation's economy and give New Yorkers higher interest rates and more unemployment." Representative Charles Rangel of Manhattan thundered that the president had charted "a reckless course." Senator Charles Schumer chastised Fed chairman Alan Greenspan for even implying that Bush's tax cuts would help the economy.

Truth is, New York has more to gain than most states from Bush's plan, which gives everybody, from street vendors to big-time investors, tax relief. Because New York's average incomes are so high, it sends billions of dollars more in tax dollars to Washington than it gets back. The state's balance of payments deficit now stands at $18 billion—the fourth largest of any state in the country. Near the end of his long tenure, Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan concluded that it was futile to try to close this gap by chasing after more federal spending. "When you are in a hole, stop digging," he advised.

The income-tax provisions of the Bush plan alone would do that, saving New Yorkers billions a year. If you toss in a repeal of the estate tax, the proposal's

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total value to the state easily exceeds $100 billion as it phases in over the next decade. While Clinton and Rangel are beyond persuasion on the potential value to New Yorkers of an across-the-board cut, Schumer may yet be susceptible to reason: he's at least acknowledged that New York's balance-of-payments deficit is mainly the product of its heavy tax burden, not too little federal aid. Let's hope he reaches the logical conclusion and supports the reduction of New Yorkers' federal tax burden.

—*E. J. McMahon*

Dumber Cops

Two Long Island police academies ease standards in the quest for "diversity."

Boasting low crime rates and high pay, Long Island's Nassau and Suffolk County Police Departments have long enjoyed a large pool of top-notch potential recruits. Yet now the two forces are concerned about a falloff in recruit quality. "Some recent Long Island police recruits have trouble writing a memo or constructing a proper paragraph," states a February *Newsday* story. Failure rates at the police academy have jumped into double digits from the 3 to 5 percent that once was the norm. Average academy grades have been falling, despite more extensive remediation.

Police officials blame the drop-off both on a tougher academic program and the surging nineties' economy, which they claim drew into the private sector young people who otherwise might have considered police careers. But the far more likely culprit is watered-down entrance-exam standards. Under pressure from federal racial discrimination suits, both counties have in recent years de-emphasized "cognitive" testing in their entrance exams—that is, assessing potential recruits' ability to read, write, think inferentially, and exercise judgment—in favor of using "personality profiles" assumed to be fairer to minorities. The exams now consist disproportionately of no-brainers like: "When you were in school, were you a member of a sports team?" Right answers are based on a profile of a "successful" cop.

Dramatically lowered entrance requirements will invariably admit lots more poorly qualified recruits of all races, as the NYPD discovered in the 1970s and 80s, when it so watered down its entrance exam that a "functional illiterate" could pass it, as one official famously put it. Many officers hired under the lax standards later wound up embroiled in the police scandals that provoked Mayor Rudy Giuliani to begin raising standards again. Under pressure from the feds, Long Island's police forces seem to be repeating Gotham's mistake.

—*John A. Barnes*

Prizing Ugliness

A prestigious award unfailingly honors bad architects.

The recent awarding of the prestigious $100,000 Pritzker prize to Dutch-born architect Rem Koolhaas illustrates the self-perpetuating nature of architectural modernism. As people everywhere rebel against the icy glass and steel curtain walls, the street-destroying asymmetries, and the incongruous shapes of modernist buildings, the Pritzker goes, as usual, to an architect for whom these things define the fixed points of his style. The jury citation enthuses that Koolhaas's "ideas about buildings and urban planning made him one of the most discussed contemporary architects in the world even before any of his design projects came to fruition. . . . His body of work is as much about ideas as it is buildings."

These remarks, intended as praise, are in reality the most damning criticism. Koolhaas, like Le Corbusier before him, has perceived that the judgment of the architectural establishment falls on words, not deeds, and that the words must provide an exhilarating vision of a futuristic architecture that cares nothing for the conventions that have proved themselves in human experience.

Koolhaas's projects are what you might expect: private houses for the ultra-rich, providing panoramic views over landscapes that they spoil, and public commissions awarded by juries intimidated by modernist orthodoxy. The public buildings, with no windows that open, depend upon central heating in winter and air conditioning in summer. They bear little relation to their surroundings and invariably clash with neighboring regularities. They are expensive ecological catastrophes, dropped into the city from the cyberspace where Koolhaas lives and dreams. The jury: "[H]e is an architect obviously comfortable with the future and in close communication with its fast pace and changing configurations." But we can neither observe nor know the future; it has no pace and no

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configuration. To be in "close communication" with it means no more than doodling fantasies on a computer screen. In his response to the jury, Koolhaas says as much: "After four thousand years of failure," he tells us, "Photoshop and the computer create utopias instantly."

Fantasizing is fine, of course, provided that you don't then impose your fantasies on the rest of us. The business of architecture is not to create utopias for cyber-people, but real buildings for real human beings. And you can do that only if you respect the forms, materials, and proportions that make cities livable. Commonsense observations, these, that may appeal to *City Journal* readers; but they have no purchase with architectural juries, who are composed by, of, and for the modernists. After all, where would the modernists be without the juries to praise them? And where would the juries be without the modernists who give snob value to their praise? The Pritzker's funders would have done humanity a greater service if they had made a precondition of the award that its recipients build no actual buildings. —*Roger Scruton*

FERDINANDO SCIANNA/MAGNUM PHOTOS

A Modest Proposal

The Army of One embraces self-esteem.

General Eric Shinseki is either: a) a fan of Monica Lewinsky's headgear; or b) a supporter of social promotion—the process whereby high school students receive a diploma after four years, even if they can't read it.

Whatever his reason, the army chief of staff made a stunning announcement last October. To raise self-esteem in the ranks, each enlistee would now have the right to wear a black beret as of this June. Formerly, one would only see the coveted garment on the heads of Rangers, the military's elite combat unit (and, on certain occasions, atop Ms. Lewinsky).

Veteran Rangers suffered in silence when the army slogan changed from the challenging "Be All That You Can Be" to the egocentric "An Army of One." But the idea of a black beret simply issued, rather than earned, was more than they could tolerate. The Ranger website vibrated with denunciations of the new uniform, along with an editorial predicting that "denigrating a symbol of excellence will not by any stretch of the imagination improve the morale of soldiers."

More aggravating news followed. The deadline for producing 3 million black berets was so close that American military outfitters couldn't meet it. Therefore, the army would farm out contracts to factories overseas—in Romania and the People's Republic of China. Small wonder that President Bush ordered a review of General Shinseki's decision.

After much behind-the-scenes negotiating at the Pentagon, a Solomonic compromise came down. All U.S. soldiers will wear their black berets—but only the Rangers may wear berets in the color that's so fashionable this year: tan. As for the decision to purchase the toppers from foreign sources, Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz said that it "could change."

In light of this brouhaha, I have a modest proposal. If we grant Shinseki's premise that personnel automatically feel good about themselves by donning a symbolic piece of cloth, think of how high esprit would soar if the army issued them a coveted bit of metal. A five-pointed star, for instance. Along with olive drab uniforms and combat boots, these could go to everyone upon enlistment. In the new Army of One, each soldier would then be his—and, of course, her—own brigadier general. Oh, brass hats might complain about items that should be deserved rather than dispensed. But, hey, what's that compared to the sight of comfortable grunts gleaming with insignia and brimming with self-esteem? —*Stefan Kanfer*

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The Myth of Racial Profiling

There's no credible evidence that racial profiling exists, yet the crusade to abolish it threatens a decade's worth of crime-fighting success.

Heather Mac Donald

The anti-"racial profiling" juggernaut must be stopped, before it obliterates the crime-fighting gains of the last decade, especially in inner cities. The anti-profiling crusade thrives on an ignorance of policing and a willful blindness to the demographics of crime. Yet politicians are swarming on board. In February, President George W. Bush joined the rush, declaring portentously: "Racial profiling is wrong, and we will end it in America."

Too bad no one asked President Bush: "What exactly do you mean by 'racial profiling,' and what evidence do you have that it exists?" For the anti-profiling crusaders have created a headlong movement without defining their central term and without providing a shred of credible evidence that "racial profiling" is a widespread police practice.

The ultimate question in the profiling controversy is whether the disproportionate involvement of blacks and Hispanics with law enforcement reflects police racism or the consequences of disproportionate minority crime. Anti-profiling activists hope to make police racism an all but irrebuttable presumption whenever enforcement statistics show high rates of minority stops and arrests. But not so fast.

Two meanings of "racial profiling" intermingle in the activists' rhetoric. What we may call "hard" profiling uses race as the *only* factor in assessing criminal suspiciousness: an officer sees a black person and, without

Most cops don't see "black" or "white" but rather "good people" and "bad people."

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more to go on, pulls him over for a pat-down on the chance that he may be carrying drugs or weapons. "Soft" racial profiling is using race as one factor among others in gauging criminal suspiciousness: the highway police, for example, have intelligence that Jamaican drug posses with a fondness for Nissan Pathfinders are transporting marijuana along the northeast corridor. A New Jersey trooper sees a black motorist speeding in a Pathfinder and pulls him over in the hope of finding drugs.

The racial profiling debate focuses primarily on highway stops. The police are pulling over a disproportionate number of minority drivers for traffic offenses, goes the argument, in order to look for drugs. Sure, the driver committed an infraction, but the reason the trooper chose to stop *him*, rather than the speeder next to him, was his race.

But the profiling critics also fault both the searches that sometimes follow a highway stop and the tactics of urban policing. Any evaluation of the evidence for, and the appropriateness of, the use of race in policing must keep these contexts distinct. Highway stops should almost always be color-blind, I'll argue, but in other policing environments (including highway searches), where an officer has many clues to go on, race may be among them. Ironically, effective urban policing shows that the more additional factors an officer has in his criminal profile, the more valid race becomes—and the less significant, almost to the point of irrelevance.

Before reviewing the evidence that profiling critics offer, recall the demands that the police face every day, far from anti-police agitators and their journalist acolytes.

February 22, 2001, a town-hall meeting at P.S. 153 in Harlem between New York mayor Rudolph Giuliani and Harlem residents: a woman sarcastically asks Giuliani if police officers downtown are paid more than uptown officers, "because we don't have any quality of life in Harlem, none whatsoever. Drug dealers are allowed to stand out in front of our houses every day, to practically invade us, and nothing's done about it." Another woman complains that dealers are back on the street the day after being arrested, and notes that "addicts are so bold that we have to get off the sidewalk and go around *them*!" She calls for the declaration of a state of emergency. A man wonders if cop-basher congressman Charles Rangel, present at the meeting, could "endow the police with more power," and suggests that the NYPD coordinate with the federal Drug Enforcement Administration, the INS, and the IRS to bring order to the streets.

The audience meets Giuliani's assertions that the police have brought crime down sharply in Harlem with hoots of derision. No one mentions "police brutality."

Valentine's Day, 2001, a police-community meeting at Harlem's 28th Precinct: an elegant man in an angora turtleneck, tiny blue glasses, and a shadow of a goatee breaks a local taboo by asking what the precinct is doing "to address dealing on the corners." Most residents shrink from mentioning the problem at precinct meetings for fear of retaliation from dealers. A tense silence falls. The man, a restaurant investor, tells me, "If this was 59th and Park, the police wouldn't allow these individuals to hang out on the corner." He can't understand why there's no "immediate result," if the police have in fact been cracking down on drug-dealing. "I don't think it should be so hard to dismantle," he says impatiently.

February 12, 2001, the fifth floor of a hulking yellow apartment building on Lenox Road in Flatbush, Brooklyn: two officers from the 67th Precinct investigate an anonymous call reporting a group of youths smoking marijuana in the hallway. The boys have disappeared. As officers check the stairwell, a gaunt middle-aged man sporting a wildly patterned black-and-white tie courteously introduces himself as Mr. Johnson, the building superintendent. After slowly bending down to pick up a discarded cigarette butt, he asks politely if anything more can be done about the kids who come from the next building to smoke pot in his hallway.

This is the demand—often angry, sometimes wistful—that urban police forces constantly hear: *get rid of the drugs*! These recent appeals come *after* the most successful war on crime that New York City has ever conducted. A decade and a half ago, when drug-related drive-by shootings became

Troopers should base highway stops almost entirely on severity of traffic violation.

JONATHAN BLAIR/CORBIS

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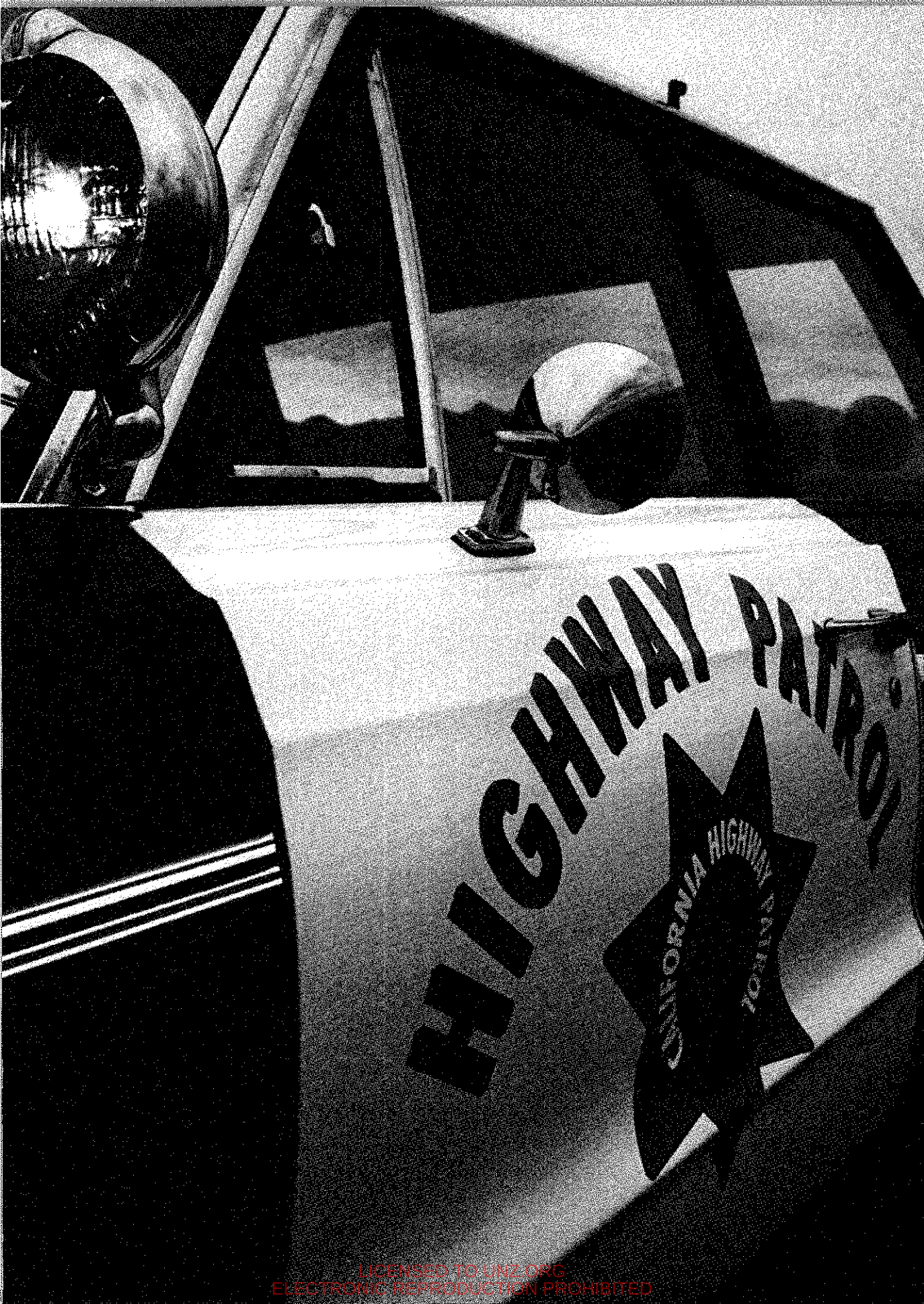

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epidemic, inner-city residents nationwide were calling even more frantically for protection from drug violence. When New Jersey, a key state on the drug corridor from Central America to New England, sent its state highway troopers to do foot patrols in Camden and Trenton, residents met them with cheers.

In New York, the mayhem eventually led to the development of the Giuliani administration's assertive policing that strives, quite successfully, to prevent crime from happening. Outside of New York, the widespread pleas to stop drug violence led the Drug Enforcement Administration to enlist state highway police in their anti-drug efforts. The DEA and the Customs Service had been using intelligence about drug routes and the typical itineraries of couriers to interdict drugs at airports; now the interdiction war would expand to the nation's highways, the major artery of the cocaine trade.

The DEA taught state troopers some common identifying signs of drug couriers: nervousness; conflicting information about origin and destination cities among vehicle occupants; no luggage for a long trip; lots of cash; lack of a driver's license or insurance; the spare tire in the back seat; rental license plates or plates from key source states like Arizona and New Mexico; loose screws or scratches near a vehicle's hollow spaces, which can be converted to hiding places for drugs and guns. The agency also shared intelligence about the types of cars that couriers favored on certain routes, as well as about the ethnic makeup of drug-trafficking organizations. A typical DEA report from the early 1990s noted that "large-scale interstate trafficking networks controlled by Jamaicans, Haitians, and black street gangs dominate the manufacture and distribution of crack." The 1999 "Heroin Trends" report out of Newark declared that "predominant wholesale traffickers are Colombian, followed by Dominicans, Chinese, West African/Nigerian, Pakistani, Hispanic and Indian. Mid-levels are dominated by Dominicans, Colombians, Puerto Ricans, African-Americans and Nigerians."

According to the racial profiling crowd, the war on drugs immediately became a war on minorities, on the highways and off. Their alleged evidence for racial profiling comes in two varieties: anecdotal, which is of limited value, and statistical, which on examination proves entirely worthless.

The most notorious racial profiling anecdote may have nothing to do with racial profiling at all. On April 23, 1998, two New Jersey state troopers pulled over a van that they say was traveling at 74 miles an hour in a 55-mile-an-hour zone on the New Jersey Turnpike. As they approached on foot, the van backed toward them, knocking one trooper down, hitting the patrol car, and then getting sideswiped as it entered the traffic lane still in reverse. The troopers fired 11 rounds at the van, wounding three of the four passengers, two critically.

Attorneys for the van passengers deny that the van was speeding. The only reason the cops pulled it over, critics say, was that its occupants were black and Hispanic.

If the troopers' version of the incident proves true, it is hard to see how racial profiling enters the picture. The van's alleged speed would have legitimately drawn the attention of the police. As for the shooting: whether justified or not, it surely was prompted by the possibly deadly trajectory of the van, not the race of the occupants. Nevertheless, on talk show after talk show, in every newspaper story denouncing racial profiling, the turnpike shooting has come to symbolize the lethal dangers of "driving while black."

Less notoriously, black motorists today almost routinely claim that the only reason they are pulled over for highway stops is their race. Once they are pulled over, they say, they are subject to harassment, including traumatic searches. Some of these tales are undoubtedly true. Without question, there are obnoxious officers out there, and some officers may ignore their training and target minorities. But since the advent of video cameras in patrol cars, installed in the wake of the racial profiling controversy, most charges of police racism, testified to under oath, have been disproved as lies.

The allegation that police systematically single out minorities for unjustified law enforcement ultimately stands or falls on numbers. In suits against police departments across the country, the ACLU and the Justice Department have waved studies aplenty allegedly demonstrating selective enforcement. None of them holds up to scrutiny.

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The typical study purports to show that minority motorists are subject to disproportionate traffic stops. Trouble is, no one yet has devised an adequate benchmark against which to measure if police are pulling over, searching, or arresting "too many" blacks and Hispanics. The question must always be: *too many compared with what*? Even anti-profiling activists generally concede that police pull drivers over for an actual traffic violation, not for no reason whatsoever, so a valid benchmark for stops would be the number of serious traffic violators, not just drivers. If it turns out that minorities tend to drive more recklessly, say, or have more equipment violations, you'd expect them to be subject to more stops. But to benchmark accurately, you'd also need to know the number of miles driven by different racial groups, so that you'd compare stops per man-mile, not just per person. Throw in age demographics as well: if a minority group has more young people—read: immature drivers—than whites do, expect more traffic stops of that group. The final analysis must then compare police deployment patterns with racial driving patterns: if more police are on the road when a higher proportion of blacks are driving—on weekend nights, say—stops of blacks will rise.

"No one has devised an adequate benchmark against which to measure if police are pulling over 'too many' blacks."

No traffic-stop study to date comes near the requisite sophistication. Most simply compare the number of minority stops with some crude population measure, and all contain huge and fatal data gaps. An ACLU analysis of Philadelphia traffic stops, for example, merely used the percentage of blacks in the 1990 census as a benchmark for stops made seven years later. In about half the stops that the ACLU studied, the officer did not record the race of the motorist. The study ignored the rate of traffic violations by race, so its grand conclusion of selective enforcement is meaningless.

Only two studies, both by Temple University social psychologist John Lamberth, have attempted to create a violator benchmark. The ACLU used one to sue, successfully, the Maryland state police; a criminal defense attorney in New Jersey used the other to free 17 accused black drug traffickers. Lamberth alleged that blacks in Maryland and southern New Jersey were stopped at higher rates than their representation in the violator population would seemingly warrant. But he defined violator so broadly—in Maryland, traveling at least one mile, and in New Jersey, traveling at least six miles, over the speed limit—that he included virtually the entire driving population. Lamberth must not have spent much time talking to real cops, for his definition of violator ignores how police actually decide whom to stop. Someone gliding sedately at 56 mph in a 55 mph zone has a radically different chance of being pulled over than someone barreling along at 80. An adequate benchmark must capture the kind of driving likely to draw police attention. Despite his severely flawed methodology, Lamberth is in great demand as a racial profiling guru.

Do minorities commit more of the kinds of traffic violations that police target? This is a taboo question among the racial profiling crowd; to ask it is to reveal one's racism. No one has studied it. But some evidence suggests that it may be the case. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration found that blacks were 10 percent of drivers nationally, 13 percent of drivers in fatal accidents, and 16 percent of drivers in injury accidents. (Lower rates of seatbelt use may contribute to these numbers.) Random national surveys of drivers on weekend nights in 1973, 1986, and 1996 found that blacks were more likely to fail breathalyzer tests than whites. In Illinois, blacks have a higher motorist fatality rate than whites. Blacks in one New Jersey study were 23 percent of all drivers arrested at the scene of an accident for driving drunk, though only 13.5 percent of highway users. In San Diego, blacks have more accidents than their population figures would predict. Hispanics get in a disproportionate number of accidents nationally.

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But though the numbers to date are incapable of telling us anything about racial profiling, that does not mean that it was not going on in some locations, at some times. Hard racial profiling in car stops—pulling over one speeder among many just because he happens to be black or Hispanic—has surely been rare. But conversations with officers in strong interdiction states such as New Jersey suggest that some troopers probably did practice soft racial profiling—pulling someone over because driver *and* car *and* direction *and* number and type of occupants fit the components of a courier profile.

Over time, officers' experience had corroborated the DEA intelligence reports: minorities were carrying most of the drugs. An example of the patterns they noticed: a group of young blacks with North Carolina plates traveling south out of Manhattan's Lincoln Tunnel into New Jersey? Good chance they're carrying weapons and drugs, having just made a big buy in the city. Catch them northbound? Good chance they're carrying big money and guns. Some officers inevitably started playing the odds—how many, the numbers cannot yet tell us.

Despite the hue and cry, there is nothing illegal about using race as one factor among others in assessing criminal suspiciousness. Nevertheless, the initial decision to pull a car over should be based almost always on seriousness of traffic violation alone—unless, of course, evidence of other lawbreaking, such as drug use, is visible. If the result is that drug couriers assiduously observe the speed limit, fine. But compared with most other policing environments, highways are relatively cueless places. In assessing the potential criminality of a driver speeding along with the pack on an eight-lane highway, an officer normally has much less to work with than on a city street or sidewalk. His locational cues—traveling on an interstate pointed toward a drug market, say—are crude, compared with those in a city, where an officer can ask if this particular block is a drug bazaar. His ability to observe the behavior of a suspect over time is limited by the speed of travel. In such an environment, blacks traveling 78 mph should not face a greater chance of getting pulled over than white speeders just because they are black and happen to be driving a car said to be favored by drug mules.

Soft racial profiling was probably not widespread enough to have influenced traffic-stop rates significantly. Nor will eliminating it quickly change the belief among many blacks that any time they get stopped for a traffic violation, it is because of their race. Nevertheless, state police commanders should eliminate any contribution that soft profiling may make to that perception, unless strong evidence emerges (as it has not so far) that soft profiling has had an extremely high success rate in drug interdiction. Far more is at stake here than the use of race in traffic stops. Specious anti-racial profiling analysis threatens to emasculate policing in areas where drug enforcement is on a far stronger basis.

The most important victory of the anti-racial profiling agitators occurred not on the traffic-stop battlefield, but on the very different terrain of the searches that sometimes follow a stop. And here is where people who care about law enforcement should really start to worry. On April 20, 1999, New Jersey's then-attorney general Peter Verniero issued his "Interim Report of the State Police Review Team Regarding Allegations of Racial Profiling." It was a bombshell, whose repercussions haven't stopped yet.

"The problem of disparate treatment [of blacks] is real, not imagined," the report famously declared. Governor Christine Todd Whitman chimed in: "There is no question that racial profiling exists at some level." The media triumphantly broadcast the findings as conclusive proof of racial profiling not just in the Garden State but nationally. The *New York Times* started regularly referring to New Jersey's "racial bias" on the highways as incontrovertible fact. Defense attorneys and their clients celebrated as well. "Whenever I have a state police case, I file a suppression motion . . . alleging that the stop was based on color of skin and therefore illegal," a Trenton criminal defense attorney told the *New York Times*. "And now guess what? The state agrees with me!"

Yet the report's influential analysis is shoddy beyond belief. Contrary to popular perception, Verniero did not reach any conclusions about racial profiling in stops. His finding of "disparate

Residents of poor communities begged police to stop the drug violence.

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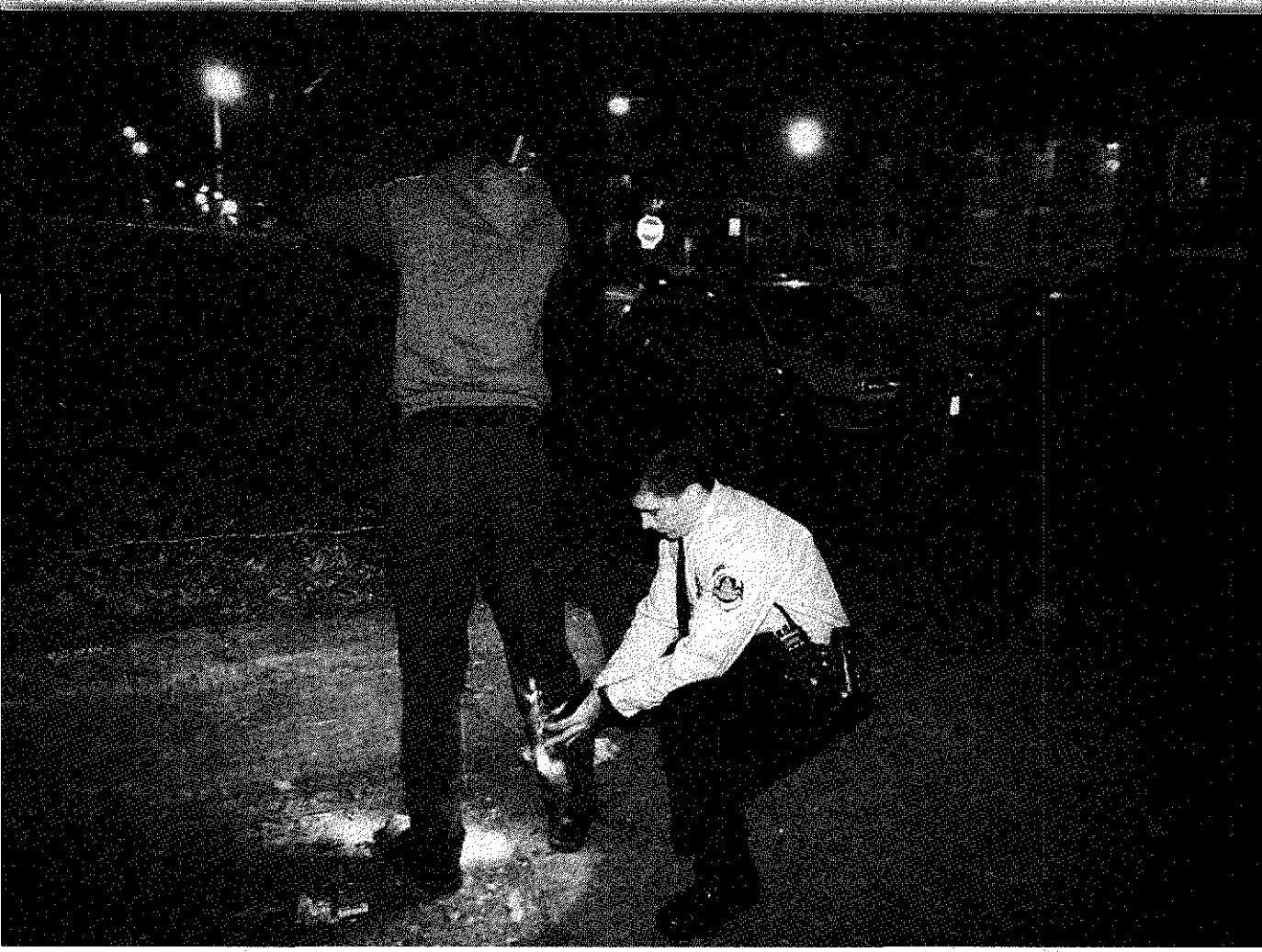

After a traffic stop, a Washington, D.C., police officer searches a motorist for drugs.

treatment" is based on the percentage of "consent searches" performed on minorities *after* a stop has occurred. (In a consent search, the motorist agrees to allow the trooper to search his car and person, without a warrant or probable cause.) Between 1994 and 1998, claims the report, 53 percent of consent searches on the southern end of the New Jersey Turnpike involved a black person, 21 percent involved whites, and overall, 77 percent involved minorities. But these figures are meaningless, because Verniero does not include racial information about search requests that were denied, and his report mixes stops, searches, and arrests from different time periods.

But most important: Verniero finds culpable racial imbalance in the search figures without suggesting a proper benchmark. He simply assumes that 53 percent black consent searches is too high. Compared with what? If blacks in fact carry drugs at a higher rate than do whites, then this search rate merely reflects good law enforcement. If the police are now to be accused of racism every time that they go where the crime is, that's the end of public safety.

The hue and cry over the alleged New Jersey search rate makes sense only if we assume that drug trafficking is spread evenly across the entire population and that officers are unable to detect the signs of a courier once they have pulled over a car. There are powerful reasons to reject both these assumptions.

Judging by arrest rates, minorities are vastly overrepresented among drug traffickers. Blacks make up over 60 percent of arrests in New Jersey for drugs and weapons, though they are 13.5 percent of the population. Against such a benchmark, the state police search rates look proportionate.

The attorney general's report dismissed this comparison with an argument that has become *de rigueur* among the anti-racial profiling crowd, even in Congress: the "circularity" argument. Arrest and conviction data for drugs and weapons are virtually meaningless, said Verniero. They tell you nothing about the world and everything about the false stereotypes that guide the police. If the police find more contraband on blacks and Hispanics, that is merely because they are looking harder for it, driven

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by prejudiced assumptions. If the police were to target whites with as much enforcement zeal, goes this reasoning, they would find comparable levels of criminality. David Harris, a University of Toledo law school professor and the leading expert for the anti-profiling forces, makes this preposterous argument. An enforcement effort directed at 40-year-old white law professors, he assures a Senate subcommittee, would yield noticeable busts. The disproportionate minority arrests then reinforce the initial, racist stereotypes, and the vicious cycle begins all over again—too many minorities arrested, too many whites going free.

The circularity argument is an insult to law enforcement and a prime example of the anti-police advocates' willingness to rewrite reality. Though it is hard to prove a negative—in this case, that there is *not* a large cadre of white drug lords operating in the inner cities—circumstantial evidence rebuts the activists' insinuation. Between 1976 and 1994, 64 percent of the homicide victims in drug turf wars were black, according to a Heritage Foundation analysis of FBI data. Sixty-seven percent of known perpetrators were also black. Likewise, some 60 percent of victims and perpetrators in drug-induced fatal brawls are black. These figures match the roughly 60 percent of drug offenders in state prison who are black. Unless you believe that white traffickers are less violent than black traffickers, the arrest, conviction, and imprisonment rate for blacks on drug charges appears consistent with the level of drug activity in the black population. (And were it true that white dealers *are* less violent, wouldn't we expect police to concentrate their enforcement efforts on the most dangerous parts of the drug trade?)

The notion that there are lots of heavy-duty white dealers sneaking by undetected contradicts the street experience of just about every narcotics cop you will ever talk to—though such anecdotal evidence, of course, would fail to convince the ACLU, convinced as it is of the blinding racism that afflicts most officers. "The hard-core sellers are where the hard-core users are—places like 129th Street in Harlem," observes Patrick Harnett, retired chief of the narcotics division for the NYPD. "It's not white kids from Rockland County who are keeping black sellers in business."

"If police are accused of racism every time they go where the crime is, that's the end of public safety."

The cops go where the deals are. When white club owners, along with Israelis and Russians, still dominated the Ecstasy trade, that's whom the cops were arresting. Recently, however, big shipments have been going to minority neighborhoods; subsequent arrests will reflect crime intelligence, not racism.

There's not a single narcotics officer who won't freely admit that there are cocaine buys going down in the men's bathrooms of Wall Street investment firms—though at a small fraction of the amount found on 129th Street. But that is not where community outrage, such as that Mayor Giuliani heard in Harlem, is directing the police, because they don't produce violence and street intimidation.

Ultimately, the circularity argument rests on a massive denial of reality, one that is remarkably vigorous and widespread. In March, 2000, for example, New Jersey senator Robert Torricelli asserted before then-senator John Ashcroft's Judiciary Subcommittee: "Statistically it cannot bear evidence [*sic*] to those who suggest, as our former superintendent of the state police suggested, that certain ethnic or racial groups disproportionately commit crimes. They do not." Needless to say, Torricelli did not provide any statistics.

The second condition necessary to explain the higher minority search rates on the highway is patrol officers' ability to detect drug trafficking. Unlike the initial decision to pull over a car, the decision to request permission to search rests on a wealth of cues. One of the most frequent is conflicting narratives among passengers and driver.

SHEPARD SHERBELL/SABA

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"If a group in a car is carrying drugs, there will always be inconsistencies in their stories," reports Ed Lennon, head of the New Jersey Troopers Union. "It's unbelievable. A lot of times the driver won't know the passengers' first or last names—'I only know him as Bill'—or they'll get the names completely wrong. Sometimes they'll have a preplanned answer regarding their destination, but their purpose in being on the road will vary."

A driver's demeanor may also be a tip-off. "I've stopped white guys in pick-up trucks with a camper compartment on top," recalls Lennon. "Their chest is pounding; they're sweating, though it's the dead of winter. They won't look at you." And they're also hiding drugs.

Once a trooper stops a car, he can see the amount of luggage and its fit with the alleged itinerary, the accumulation of trash that suggests long stretches without stopping, the signs of drug use, the lack of a license and registration, the single key in the ignition and no trunk key, or the signs that the vehicle may have been fitted out with drug and weapon compartments. Some New York narcotics officers recently pulled over an Azusa SUV and noticed welding marks along the rain gutter on top. The occupants had raised the entire roof four inches to create a drug vault. If a car's windows don't roll all the way down, drugs may be concealed in the doors.

The fact that hit rates for contraband tend to be equal across racial groups, even though blacks and Hispanics are searched at higher rates, suggests that the police are successfully targeting dealers, not minorities. Race may play a role in that targeting, or it may not. Most cues of trafficking are race-neutral; it may be that race often correlates with the decision to search rather than causing it. But if race does play a role in the request to search, it is a much diminished one compared with a car stop based on a courier profile. When an officer has many independent indices of suspicion, adding his knowledge of the race of major trafficking groups to the mix is both legitimate and not overly burdensome on law-abiding minorities.

Amazingly, Attorney General Verniero acknowledges that the police merely try to maximize their hit rates in deciding whom to search, but he *blames* them for doing so. "The state police reward system gave practical impetus to the use of these inappropriate stereotypes about drug dealers" by rewarding big busts, he frets. But if the police were seeking to maximize their contraband yields, and the alleged "inappropriate stereotypes" were not helping them do so, presumably they would abandon those "stereotypes" and find some other set of cues—unless, of course, they were merely out to harass minorities for the thrill of it. But in that case, their hit rates would be lower for minorities than for whites, which they were not.

The bottom line is this: the New Jersey attorney general has branded the state police as racist without a scintilla of analysis for his finding. Yet New Jersey is the wave of the future, for racial profiling data-collection initiatives are sweeping the country. At least 30 states could soon require their state police to collect racial data on all traffic stops and searches, with the stated end of eliminating "racial profiling." Urban forces are under identical pressure. Virtually every major law-enforcement organization opposes these bills, because of their failure to deal with the benchmarking problem. Until someone devises an adequately sophisticated benchmark that takes into account population patterns on the roads, degrees of law-breaking, police deployment patterns, and the nuances of police decision making, stop data are as meaningless as they are politically explosive. Attorney General John Ashcroft has encouraged these data-gathering initiatives; he should instead withhold his support, unless local proponents can prove that they will capture the complex realities of law enforcement.

Unfortunately, the flurry of racial profiling analysis is not confined to the highways. It will wreak the most havoc on urban policing. Despite the racket by protesters, it is in city policing that race probably plays its least significant role, because officers have so many other cues from the environment. In assessing whether a pedestrian is behaving suspiciously, for example, they might already know that he is at a drug corner, about which they have received numerous complaints. They know if there has been a string of burglaries in the neighborhood. As they observe him, they can assess with whom he is interacting, and how.

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A New York Street Crime Unit sergeant in Queens describes having stopped white pedestrians who had immediately changed directions as soon as they saw his unmarked car or ducked into an alley or a store for eight seconds and then looked for him once they came out. The night I spoke to him, he was patrolling the 102nd Precinct in Woodhaven, a largely white and Hispanic neighborhood. He had earlier questioned a white kid hanging out in front of a factory. "He was breaking his neck looking back at us; we thought he was a burglar." It turns out he was waiting for a friend. Another night in another precinct, the sergeant saw two black kids on bikes. "One guy's arm was hanging straight down, like he was carrying a gun. When they saw us, the other guy took off on his bike and threw a bag away. It was felony-weight drugs." Are you ignoring whites with guns? I asked him. "Of course not; I could see the same thing tonight," he said impatiently. "I don't use race at all. The only question is: are you raising my level of suspicion? Fifteen minutes after a stop, I may not even be able to tell you the color of the guy."

"The New Jersey attorney general has branded the state police as racist without a scintilla of analysis."

Even car stops on city streets usually have more context than on a highway. "If we pass four or five guys in a car going the opposite direction," explains the Queens sergeant, "and they're all craning their necks to see if we notice them, we may reverse and follow them for a while. We won't pull them over, but our suspicion is up. We'll run their plates. If the plates don't check out, they're done. If they commit a traffic violation, we won't pull everyone out of the car yet; we'll just interview the driver. If he doesn't have paperwork, it may be a stolen car. Now everyone's coming out to be frisked."

Hard as it is to believe, criminals actually do keep turning around to look at officers, though it would seem an obvious give-away. "Thank God they're stupid, or we'd be out of a job," the sergeant laughs.

But urban policing depends on another race-neutral strength: it is data-driven. The greatest recent innovation in policing was New York's Compstat, the computer-generated crime analysis that allows police commanders to pinpoint their enforcement efforts, then allows top brass to hold them accountable for results. If robberies are up in Bushwick, Brooklyn, the precinct commander will strategically deploy his officers to find the perpetrators. Will all the suspects be black? Quite likely, for so is the neighborhood. Does that mean that the officers are racist? Hardly; they are simply going where the crime is. In most high-crime neighborhoods, race is wholly irrelevant to policing, because nearly all the residents are minorities.

Urban police chiefs worry about the data-collection mania as much as highway patrol commanders do. Ed Flynn, chief of police for Virginia's Arlington County, explains why. Last year, the black community in his jurisdiction was demanding heavier drug enforcement. "We had a series of community meetings. The residents said to us: 'Years ago, you had control over the problem. Now the kids are starting to act out again.' They even asked us: 'Where are your jump-out squads [who observe drug deals from their cars, then jump out and nab the participants]?' " So Flynn and his local commander put together an energetic strategy to break up the drug trade. They instituted aggressive motor-vehicle checks throughout the problem neighborhood. Cracked windshield, too-dark windows, expired tags, driving too fast? You're getting stopped and questioned. "We wanted to increase our presence in the area and make it quite unpleasant for the dealers to operate," Flynn says. The Arlington officers also cracked down on quality-of-life offenses like public urination, and used undercover surveillance to take out the dealers.

By the end of the summer, the department had cleaned up the crime hot spots. Community newsletters thanked the cops for breaking up the dealing. But guess what? Says Flynn: "We had also just generated a lot of data showing 'disproportionate' minority arrests." The irony, in Flynn's view, is acute. "We are responding to heartfelt

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In response to the anti-racial-profiling crusade, cops in some areas make fewer arrests.

demands for increased police presence," he says. "But this places police departments in the position of producing data at the community's behest that can be used against them."

The racial profiling analysis profoundly confuses cause and effect. "Police develop tactics in response to the disproportionate victimization of minorities by minorities, and you are calling the *tactics* the problem?" Flynn marvels.

However much the racial profilers try to divert attention away from the facts of crime, those facts remain obdurate. Arlington has a 10 percent black population, but robbery victims identify nearly 70 percent of their assailants as black. In 1998, blacks in New York City were 13 times more likely than whites to commit a violent assault, according to victim reports. As long as those numbers remain unchanged, police statistics will also look disproportionate. This is the crime problem that black leaders should be shouting about.

But the politics of racial profiling has taken over everything else. Here again, New Jersey is a model of profiling pandering, and it foreshadows the irrationality that will beset the rest of the country. In February 1999, New Jersey governor Christine Todd Whitman peremptorily fired the head of the state police, Colonel Carl Williams, whose reputation for honesty had earned him the nickname "The Truth." It was the truth that got him fired. The day before his dismissal, Williams had had the temerity to tell a newspaper reporter that minority groups dominate the cocaine and marijuana trade.

Of course, this information had constituted the heart of DEA reports for years. No matter. Stating it publicly violated some collective fairy tale that all groups commit drug crimes at equal rates. Whitman's future political career depended on getting Williams's head, and she got it. One scapegoat was not enough, however. The New Jersey state troopers who shot at the van are now on trial for attempted murder—a wildly trumped-up charge—and the attorney general has been prosecuting the case in a flagrantly political fashion.

One way to make sure that nasty confrontations with the facts about crime don't happen again is to

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stop publishing those facts. And so the New Jersey state police no longer distribute a typical felony-offender profile to their officers, because such profiles may contribute, in the attorney general's words, to "inappropriate stereotypes" about criminals. Never mind that in law enforcement, with its deadly risk, more information is always better than less. Expect calls for the barring of racial information from crime analysis to spread nationally.

The New Jersey attorney general's office has also dropped its appeal of a devastating 1996 trial court decision that had declared the state police guilty of "institutional racism." Using Lamberth's New Jersey traffic study as proof of racial profiling, the court dismissed drug indictments against 17 blacks without so much as glancing at the facts of their cases. The court was wrong on the evidence and wrong on the law, but the case now stands permanently on the books as the most important judicial decision to date on racial profiling.

"In 1998, blacks in New York City were 13 times more likely than whites to commit a violent assault."

Next, the New Jersey attorney general himself dismissed *en masse* drug and weapons charges against 128 defendants. The defendants all alleged that state troopers had pulled them over merely because of race. The attorney general was not willing to defend the state's officers and so let the defendants go free. In one case, the defendants' car allegedly passed a marked cruiser at 75 miles an hour; the occupants were openly smoking pot and drinking; the trooper found cocaine—hardly a case of racial profiling, hard or soft. Numerous requests to the attorney general's office for comment on the case have gone unanswered.

New Jersey will soon monitor the length of traffic stops that individual officers make and correlate it to the race of the motorist. It will also monitor by race the computer checks that individual officers run on license plates, on the theory that racist officers will spend more time bothering innocent black motorists and will improperly target them for background checks. Of course an officer's stop and arrest data will be closely scrutinized for racial patterns as well. And if in fact such investigatory techniques correlate with race because more minorities are breaking the law? Too bad for the cop. He will be red-flagged as a potential racist.

These programs monitoring individual officers are present in all jurisdictions that, like New Jersey, operate under a federal monitor. Along with the new state requirements for racial data collection on a department-wide basis, they will destroy assertive policing, for they penalize investigatory work. The political classes are telling police officers that if they have "too many" enforcement interactions with minorities, it is because they are racists. Officers are responding by cutting back enforcement. Drug arrests dropped 55 percent on the Garden State Parkway in New Jersey in 2000, and 25 percent on the turnpike and parkway combined. When the mayor and the police chief of Minneapolis accused Minneapolis officers of racial profiling, traffic stops dropped 63 percent. Pittsburgh officers, under a federal consent decree monitoring their individual enforcement actions, now report that they are arresting by racial quota. Arrests in Los Angeles, whose police department has been under fire from the Justice Department, dropped 25 percent in the first nine months of 2000, while homicides jumped 25 percent.

The Harlem residents who so angrily demanded more drug busts from Mayor Giuliani last February didn't care about the race of the criminals who were destroying their neighborhood. They didn't see "black" or "white." They only saw dealers—and they wanted them out. That is precisely the perspective of most police officers as well; their world is divided into "good people" and "bad people," not into this race or that.

If the racial profiling crusade shatters this commonality between law-abiding inner-city residents and the police, it will be just those law-abiding minorities who will pay the heaviest price. ■

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Why Blacks Should Give Bush a Chance

John H. McWhorter

As an African-American, I was raised in a tradition in which voting Republican was simply not done, and in my mature life I have—traditionally—voted Democratic or Independent. Yet this year, I am coming to realize that the George W. Bush administration is the most promising for black advancement in 35 years. Not since the Johnson administration has there been more concrete movement to free African-Americans from their status as the country's problem race—and the lessons we've learned from LBJ's failures mean that this administration will avoid the pitfalls of the War on Poverty's hand-out philosophy. Who would have thought that a *Republican* administration would give such promise of reaching the long-sought goal of turning things around for black America?

Predictably, leftist black pundits who claim to represent the black view in America won't grasp the import of this moment. Brent Staples of the *New York Times* informs us that "black Americans' distrust of this administration is running extraordinarily high." Jesse Jackson and Al Sharpton, histrionically comparing the irregularities in the Florida vote count to the evils of Selma, urge black Americans to refuse to acknowledge the legitimacy of the Bush administration. Yet these are calls to distrust and resist a golden opportunity for black America.

The hopeful signs are everywhere. Take public education, whose notorious failure in inner cities is one of the main problems that black America faces today. Bush and his education secretary, Rod Paige, seem serious about finding a solution. They recommend giving parents federal funds to send their kids to private schools if their local public schools fail to

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Ever since Martin Luther King's funeral in 1968, no black leader has ever equaled him . . .

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Blacks may not believe it, but the current administration offers them their best hope in decades for achieving true equality.

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BROWN BROTHERS

. . . or W. E. B. DuBois . . .

educate them. The administration has soft-pedaled the controversial term "vouchers" because of liberals' call to "preserve the public schools"; but whatever you call the policy, it stands a good chance of ensuring that children, especially disadvantaged minority kids, get the education they need for upward mobility. A Gore administration, coddling the teachers' unions and the bloated educational bureaucracies in return for votes, would have ensured this basic right to significantly fewer black children.

The leftist conviction that the discrepancies between blacks and whites in educational achievement can't be eliminated until there is no inequity of any kind in American society discourages attention to the good things that actually happen to minority children when they move to private or charter schools. Even among disadvantaged students, many of these schools are working miracles in fostering a culture of academic achievement—on small budgets. Yes, some schools of this kind fail, but there would be no reason to expect otherwise—and we certainly cannot say that large numbers of public schools are doing any better.

And in the meantime, recent studies suggest that when vouchers present underperforming public schools with the threat of demise, then—big surprise—the schools improve. While the educational bureaucracy and leftist pundits desperately seek to invalidate these studies, more disadvantaged black kids will be getting better educations during the Bush administration than at any point over the past 40 years.

Bush and Paige emphasize frequent testing of all students. Given that black students of all classes notoriously underperform on standardized tests, the black community should hail a policy that would expose their kids to tests regularly. Sure, teachers might "teach to the test." But, while cause for concern, this is a lot better than teaching students nothing—especially when black students' difficulty with such tests holds them back from admission to selective universities and professional schools.

Leftists who distrust meritocracy viscerally resist subjecting minority children to frequent standardized tests. Such people should try reading minority students' applications to colleges and graduate schools and seeing the dismayingly low SAT and GRE scores that intelligent black students submit so disproportionately. What pulls black students down on these tests is a culturally ingrained sense that the kind of thinking that the tests entail is a white endeavor rather than a race-neutral ritual. Curing this ideological handicap is a challenge. Recently, University of California president Richard Atkinson proposed a solution from the left: eliminating the SAT from UC's admissions process, like cutting the Gordian knot. However, a more reasonable solution—one that would treat black students as humans of ordinary ability and resilience—would be to give them more practice.

The view from the left on education has proven itself bankrupt in imparting knowledge, curiosity, and critical thinking. Typical has been the education bureaucracy's rejection of Bush's call for Head Start programs to teach children more regularly, at an earlier age, and according to a more standardized format than previously. Minority children, credentialed educators warn, will be so frustrated as to turn away from learning forever. But in fact they will gain the advantage that most middle-class children already have of learning the basics of reading from the age of two.

According to the left's version of compassion, black students, because of society's inequity, ought to be excused, by affirmative action, from serious competition, and many blacks find the Bush admin-

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HULTON GETTY/LIAISON

. . . or Booker T. Washington.

istration's disapproval of such racial preferences one more reason for distrust. But affirmative action means subjecting blacks to lowered standards—"the soft bigotry of low expectations," as the Bush campaign deftly phrased it. In my view, this policy was a necessary evil in the 1960s, when America was still overtly racist. But such a policy, like chemotherapy, should be administered only as long as necessary, given the havoc it wreaks upon the body politic while curing a local ailment. More and more thinkers, both black and white, argue that the time to end it is now. After all, they point out, when the University of California ended racial preferences, the number of black students fell at only two schools and increased at most others.

One political party envisions lowered standards as black Americans' fate for the foreseeable future. The other supports improving schools so that blacks can compete on their own. A Martian recently landed in America would wonder just why a group suffering from a legacy of being considered inferior would warmly embrace lowered standards and fiercely resist being prepared for competition.

The evidence so far is that ending affirmative action produces real benefits for minority kids. In California, only when the elimination of racial preferences was clearly permanent did the University of California start serious outreach programs in minority schools to prepare students to submit competitive applications. And in Texas, eliminating racial preferences seems to help achieve the very goal we are supposedly striving for: closing the performance gap. Studies by psychologist Ryan Brown at the University of Texas show that the belief that they were selected because they were the best qualified candidate makes minority and women students perform better than those who believe they were selected because of race or sex—even when both groups of students are in reality equally well qualified. We are unlikely to hear about this study in the *New York Times*, since the left wing would rather excuse minorities from serious competition than equip them to win.

Republicans emphasize social conservatism and family values. As quiet as it is often kept, so do many black Americans. The media and the movie and record companies give disproportionate play to the one-fifth of blacks who live in the inner city, and black leftists tend to identify "authentic" blackness with what Ebonics advocate Geneva Smitherman calls "the grass-roots folks, the masses, the sho-nuff niggers—in short, all those black folks who do not aspire to white middle-class-American standards." Yet these "sho-nuff niggers" are not the majority of black Americans, who are in fact a thoroughly buttoned-up culture in many ways.

A common black view is that whites are often rather libertine in comparison with blacks. The Harvard/*Washington Post*/Kaiser Family Foundation national survey of 1997 found that half of the black women polled would approve of returning to 1950s gender roles. The 1992 National Health and Social Life survey found that 83 percent of black women considered teenage sex wrong, and that 69 percent founded their sexual behavior on religious conviction. Overall, black Americans, even in the moneyed and educated classes, are deeply Christian. A 1996 Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies survey found that 76 percent of blacks favored prayer in the schools.

Such findings don't surprise me, as an African-American; ordinary black American culture graphically reflects attitudes like these. The typical black dance party at a university does not include alcohol; those who want to drink are expected to BYOB, and most do not. I have found, given my rather casual lecture style, that black students often look uncomfortable at my occasional up-to-the-minute slang or oblique off-

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color allusions that white students find funny. When I was in college, I went to a movie with an African-American woman of no especial religious fervor who insisted we walk out after the first 20 minutes because of the film's rampant sex, something only the devoutly religious white women I have known would have done. I took this in stride as reflecting a familiar aspect of black American culture—one that black Americans step away from when they insist on voting for the party whose ideology, which embraces resistance to establishment values as "self-expression," would dismiss my date's behavior as backward.

Black audiences regularly applaud calls for blacks to help themselves. Where welfare is concerned, this attitude is more consistent with the Republican idea that welfare programs should be time-limited, giving people a head start on fending for themselves, than with the Democrats' long-standing view that aid to poor blacks should mean open-ended handouts, which in practice have deprived most recipients of the incentive to succeed. Surely, a humane society will have a safety net for those truly incapable of fending for themselves, and no one expects the welfare rolls to be reduced to zero (current policy allows a 20 percent margin). However, the predictable difficulties of reforming welfare are preferable to maintaining a three-generations-deep culture of children growing up in a world where work is an option rather than a given. Democratic welfare apologists appear to feel otherwise—that life's imperfections justify changing the rules for black people, a stunningly condescending conviction.

Meanwhile, Bush has further substituted for the old handout culture the Faith-Based and Community Initiatives, allowing churches to apply for funds to help inner-city people rebuild their lives. Bush's approach shows real understanding that the transformation of inner cities depends on an inner transformation of individuals, a drive toward personal redemption that motivates people to take control of themselves and their surroundings. For 35 years, the belief that checks in the mail—no strings attached—were all that the chronically poor needed to join the mainstream has been the orthodoxy of the enlightened. But given that 35 years of experience have shown pretty conclusively that this unprecedented approach doesn't work, blacks' distrust of the Bush administration is all the harder to justify.

"Bush understands that the transformation of inner cities depends on an inner transformation of individuals."

To resist the revamping of welfare is to encourage black misery and marginality. No Democratic administration since the New Deal has offered a more promising approach to black poverty than Bush's faith-based plan, and even the New Deal only included blacks as an afterthought. Civil rights leaders of the past would have been shocked to see a black America that embraces the idea of living on a permanent dole as culturally authentic.

The inability of so many black movers and shakers to see the promise to blacks in this administration is predictable. Since the late 1960s, black America has assumed that individual initiative is largely beside the point until all racism, even in its most subtle forms, has disappeared. Black thinking took this detour just as the Civil Rights Act enfranchised a race battered into an inferiority complex by centuries of oppression. Wounded people, infused with self-doubt, often seek validation in attributing their problems to external influences, and the anti-establishment ideology of white America in the late 1960s provided powerful validation of this tendency among blacks. Viewed through this lens, black students' lagging performance in primary school can only be due to inadequate funding. Lowered standards in college admissions is the only possible humane response. The only logical solution to inner-city pathology is handouts. And the people displaying these pathologies are heroes,

GERHARD GSCHEIDLE

Since the 1960s, black orthodoxy has believed that those who resist the system are more authentic than those who join it.

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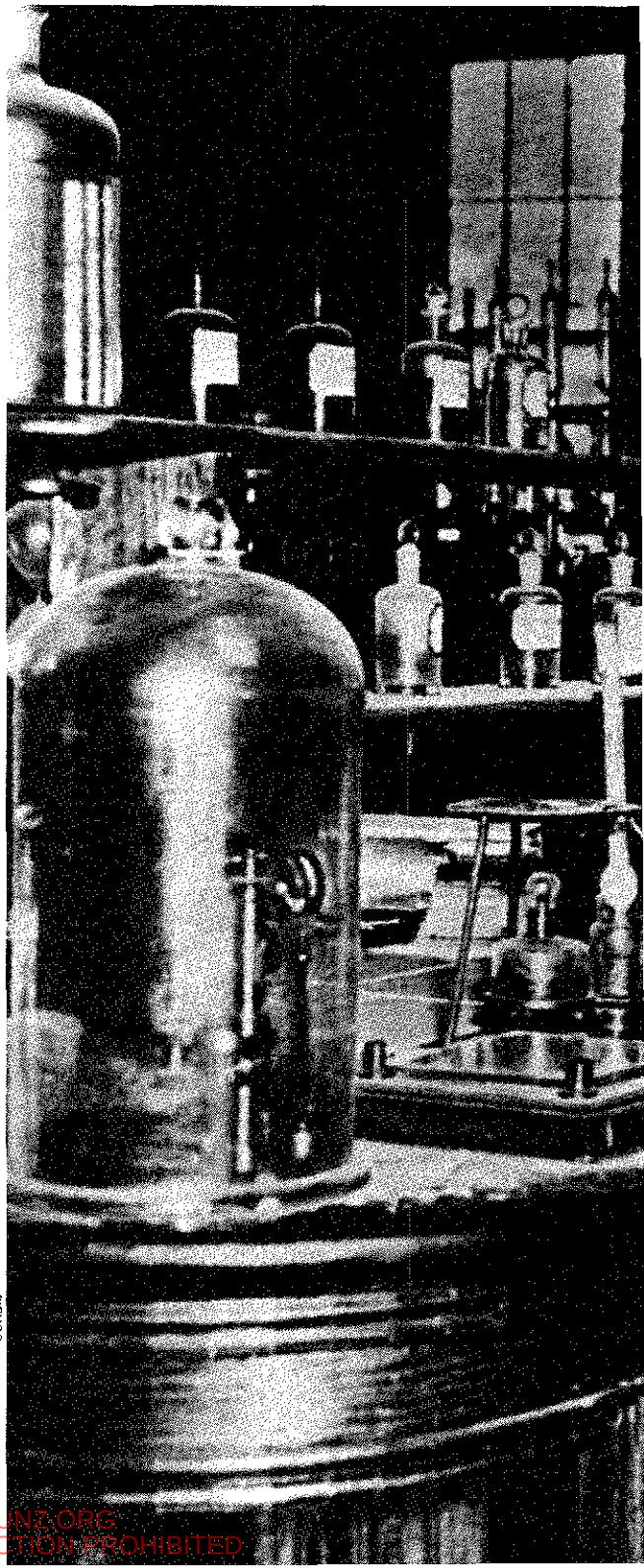
resisting an ignoble system, and thus their values are "authentic," in contrast to successful blacks, who are "sell-outs" in joining that system.

Sure, there is racism in America—only a fool could deny it. But the issue in the year 2001 is how much: because ultimately, a race shows its worth not by how much it can exact from others, but by how much success it can achieve through its own efforts. And in America today, the stunning success of coal-black Caribbean and African immigrants, as well as of their children born here, who are not outwardly distinguishable as anything but African-American, is but one of many eloquent testimonies that for black Americans the possibilities are breathtaking.

Even under the oppression they suffered in the past, American blacks understood the value of effort and striving. Take the Tulsa story. In the early 1900s, black Tulsans had developed a thriving business district, with all the amenities that whites enjoyed on the other side of town—restaurants, hotels, banks, theaters, stores of all kinds. They had achieved this in a world where racism was more naked than anything that black Americans experience today. So virulent was it, in fact, that in response to a trumped-up story of a black man making advances toward a white woman, whites burned the district to the ground in 1921 and killed hundreds of blacks.

Black publications and Internet discussion groups have treated this story as a warning to watch our backs against the eternal hostility lying just beneath the surface in all whites. But the Tulsa story really provides us with a more enlightening message: that ordinary blacks accomplished so very much at a time when white membership in the Ku Klux Klan was as ordinary as belonging to the Rotarians, when there was not a single black in Congress, and when unabashed racism was conventional among whites.

Many other cities, including Washington and Baltimore, had similar black business quarters. Black Tulsa was not built by a once-in-a-lifetime effort by superstars but by ordinary people making the best of a bad situation. Yes, black Tulsa was beaten



CORBIS

George Washington Carver set an example of self-reliance and achievement . . .

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SPENCER PLATT/NEWSMAKERS/LIAISON

. . . unlike the charity-seeking message of the Rev. Al Sharpton, left, and the Rev. Jesse Jackson, right, shown days after Jackson admitted fathering a daughter in an extramarital affair with an employee.

down—but in a vastly different era. However prevalent one considers racism still to be, few of us would argue that the blacks taking over the housing in their inner-city neighborhoods risk the depredations of marauding bands of white bigots. In fact, white banks are chasing those blacks around with loan offers.

Consider one further example of black achievement despite white hostility. Before the 1960s, black students in segregated schools often performed at the same level as whites if not higher—despite paltry school budgets and crumbling buildings. In 1899, black students at Washington, D.C.'s Dunbar High School were outscoring two of D.C.'s white schools, and until the 1940s Dunbar students continued to perform at or above the national average. Education specialists assert that black students' problems in school today are due to self-doubt ultimately rooted in the history of slavery and segregation—but students in 1899 were just a few decades past Emancipation. The parents of many of them had been slaves themselves.

Black economist Thomas Sowell has chronicled this school and similar schools in Harlem in the 1940s—only for black linguist and education specialist John Baugh to accuse him of advocating "the resegregation of schools." But black scholars would do better to let the past speak to us more constructively. Sowell is showing that if all-black schools could bring out the best in black students of all class levels even in an overtly racist America, then this success is a beacon for the possibilities available to us today.

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These are the visions that must inform our response to the Bush administration. But the misidentification of racism as an obstacle rather than an inconvenience misleads black leaders into supposing that the measure of an administration is not the extent to which it lays the foundations for black individual initiative but the extent to which its representatives give indication of liking black people, of "feeling their pain" enough to keep the handouts flowing and the standards lowered. This mindset accounts for the black press's greater interest in John Ashcroft's appointment as attorney general than in the Faith-Based and Community Initiatives, which offers blacks concrete assistance in bettering themselves.

But because racism is, in fact, not a decisive obstacle to black success today, our emphasis must be not upon whether we are liked, but what the administration can do for us in terms of concrete uplift. This was clearer to civil rights leaders before the anti-establishment culture taught black America otherwise. In 1912, W. E. B. DuBois readily urged blacks to deny their votes to the Republican party, still thought of as the party of Lincoln, when the Taft administration caved in to pressure from the South and abandoned even the perfunctory commitment to black appointments to government posts that Teddy Roosevelt had displayed. DuBois instead threw his support behind Roosevelt's attempt at a comeback campaign as a Progressive.

Yet though we remember Roosevelt as having dined at the White House with Booker T. Washington, he was very much a man of his era in his views of blacks, and DuBois knew it. Roosevelt unabashedly considered blacks a "backward race" and quite openly viewed miscegenation as a weakening of white blood. DuBois, throughout his career up to this point, had stressed that his goal was not to get whites to love black people but to take away the obstacles to black self-realization.

And when Roosevelt refused to incorporate DuBois's proposed race policies into his platform, DuBois readily left him flat in favor of the Democratic candidacy of Woodrow Wilson. Again, DuBois was well aware that Wilson, who exalted *The Birth of a Nation* as "writing history with lightning" and "all so terribly true," did not "admire Negroes," as DuBois put it. The point was that Wilson offered the best possibilities for black achievement at the time, whatever he thought of blacks.

"DuBois stressed the *progress* blacks had made, whereas a similar platform today would focus on black-white inequities."

Even the Progressive plank that DuBois had offered Roosevelt contrasts tellingly with the modern civil rights agenda. DuBois wrote: "The Progressive party recognizes that distinctions of race or class in political life have no place in a democracy. Especially does the party realize that a group of 10,000,000 people who have in a generation changed from a slave to a free labor system, reestablished family life, accumulated $1,000,000,000 [in] property, including 20,000,000 acres of land, and reduced their illiteracy from 80 to 30 per cent, deserve and must have justice, opportunity and a voice in their own government."

When DuBois wrote, racism was a much more serious obstacle in any black person's life than today—he himself, one of the world's leading sociologists, was barred from employment by any white university. Yet he stressed the *progress* blacks had made, whereas any similar platform today would surely focus on black-white inequities. DuBois bases his call for justice on blacks' achievements, whereas today the civil rights establishment bases its calls for justice on simple moral indignation over the fact that racism is not yet completely dead and that advancement is more challenging for some than for others. DuBois reflexively espouses family life, while today's leaders hold up the high rate of black illegitimacy as one more evidence of racism's cruel effects on blacks and thus as one more argument for an open-ended dole.

In 1905, DuBois convened the first Niagara conference of progress-minded blacks in Buffalo. This was a time when dozens of black men were being lynched each year, and the conferees themselves ended up at

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the last minute having to book a hotel across the river in Canada, because no hotel in Buffalo (Buffalo, not Birmingham!) would take them. Yet in the "Declaration of Principles" that resulted from the conference, DuBois bitterly complained that black America "needs justice and is given charity." True empowerment, DuBois understood, is generated from within.

Early civil rights advocacy, then, was about what we have achieved, and will achieve, despite racism. Political allegiance depended upon which party was most with this program of achievement, not which party "felt our pain." And today, it is the Republican party that points the way to the only future any race could want: one based on individual achievement, bolstered by the ordinary human resilience that overcomes inconvenience.

In contrast, what would have happened for blacks if Gore had won? A Gore administration, regarding welfare reform as a necessary evil, would have dragged its feet over every detail. Through court appointments and executive orders, it would have resisted the nation's growing dissatisfaction with affirmative action. Gore might have paid lip service to the rebuilding of inner cities by encouraging white businesses to move into them, but he would have strongly supported the resistance of black victicrats such as New York's Al Sharpton and Charles Rangel to the idea of "whitey moving in on our communities." Gore gave no sign of offering anything as concrete as the Faith-Based and Community Initiatives to encourage these communities to rebuild themselves *without* relying on Starbucks and Burger King.

None of this is exactly rocket science. Our Martian visitor would readily expect that blacks, especially influential and thoughtful blacks, would embrace the Republican platform. But they reject it, angrily, and I know firsthand how angrily, since I received more hate mail in one week for one newspaper editorial urging blacks to reconsider the import of the new Bush administration than I did over six months for my controversial book, *Losing the Race*.

Why? Because the conviction that blacks remain hobbled by "the system" makes the "authentic" black person see the Democrats, in their relentless pandering to black victimology, as the only logical—the only possible—choice. This spirit explains why Toni Morrison famously called Bill Clinton our first black president. Sure, she partly had in mind his southern cultural heritage and his connection to black music, but she would not have given this accolade to Lyndon Johnson, say, despite his genuine commitment to desegregation—even if he had played the saxophone. What pushed Clinton over the black edge for Morrison was his theatrically displayed sympathy for the black plight.

Morrison's declaration eloquently demonstrates how completely the essence of "blackness" has been viewed since the 1960s as synonymous with victimhood. That feeling explains the contumely heaped upon blacks who are concerned with improving conditions for the race, but who seek improvement through other means than demanding charity under fancy names. Following his predecessor's lead, Gore would surely have breakfasted with Reverend Al and summitted with the Congressional Black Caucus, bringing up Colin Powell whenever affirmative action came up—and in the end, leaving all of us right where we were before his election.

In other words, Clinton's prowess on the saxophone doesn't change the fact that the Democratic party no more deserved the black vote last November than the Republican party did in 1912—a lesson that Black History Month might do better to impart than one more story about how much George Washington Carver could do with a peanut.

The idea that voting Republican is disloyal for a black person seems especially paradoxical in light of the Bush administration's galaxy of black officials, headed by Powell, Condoleezza Rice, and Rod Paige. Equally important, too, are the lower-level hires. Okay, John Ashcroft may not give much appearance of feeling blacks' pain—but his deputy attorney general is the black Larry Thompson and his assistant attorney general in charge of the Antitrust Division is the black Charles A. James. Federal Communications Commission head Michael Powell is also African-American.

Many black observers, of course, believe that the very participation of these people in a Republican administration strips them of their "proper black" credentials: they are "carrying the white man's water," as it is often said. But this judgment only makes sense if "blackness" means seeing oneself as an eternal victim. And these people emphatically do not:

ALAN BRIAN NILSEN/CORBIS SYGMA

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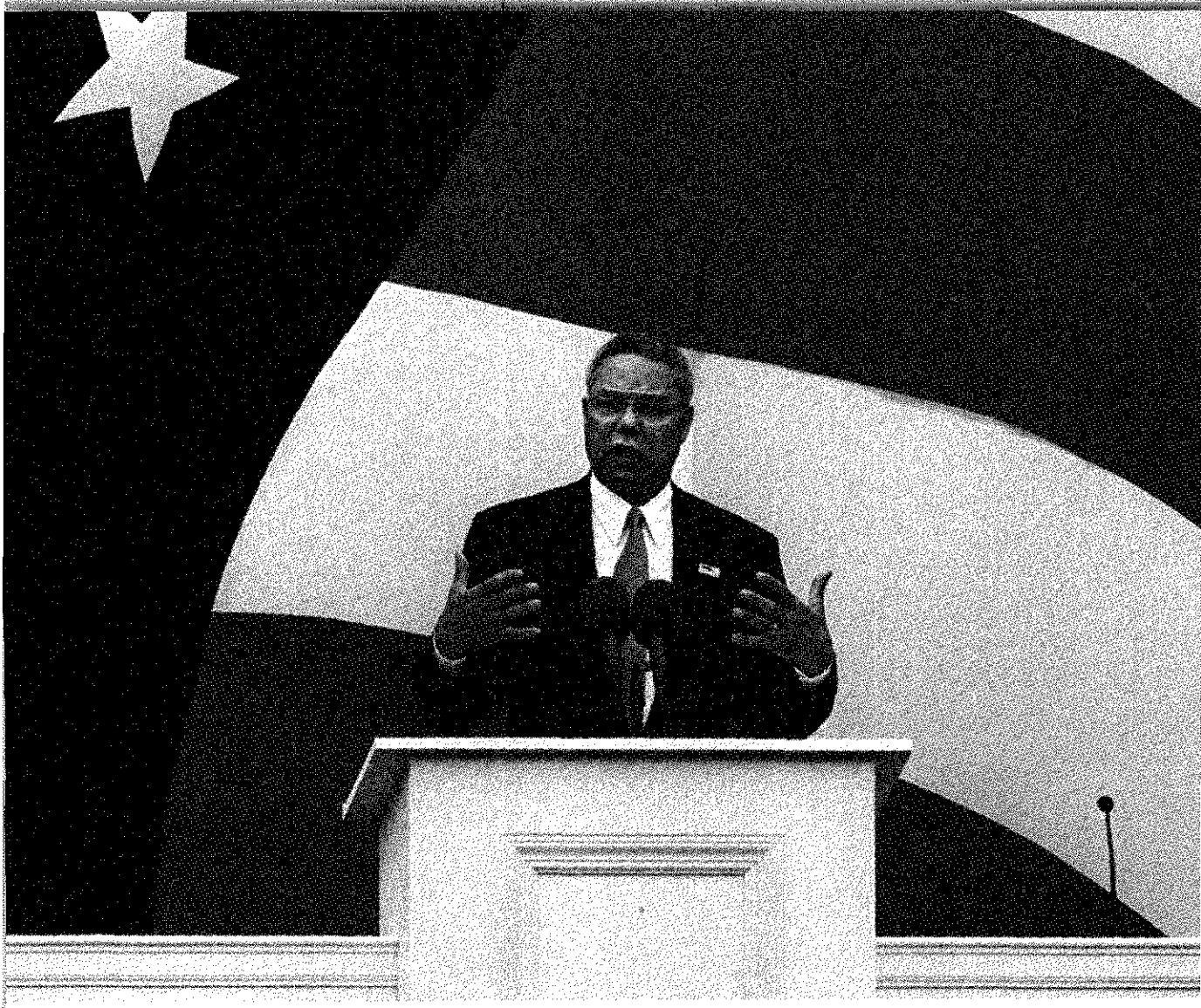

Secretary of State Colin Powell heads a galaxy of high black officials in the new Bush administration.

Deputy Attorney General Thompson, for instance, chastises black leaders for having "stressed the status of black people as victims and advocated more government assistance as the only way of overcoming our problems."

Perhaps black people who see their mission as making white America feel guilty have a certain theatrical glamour, but in the end not one civil rights leader of this stripe has spearheaded any legislation that has made a significant difference in African-Americans' fate. Let's go back to what black uplift meant in the days when Adam Clayton Powell rammed desegregation legislation through Congress and spearheaded the War on Poverty as chairman of the Education and Labor Committee; when Thurgood Marshall won the *Brown* v. *Board of Education* case; when Martin Luther King awakened the hearts of America to racism's evils and helped make the 1964 Civil Rights Act a reality. There is nothing that Jesse Jackson, Al Sharpton, Maxine Waters, or John Conyers, Jr. have accomplished for black Americans that remotely compares.

Happily, the frayed edges of the victimhood model of black advocacy are becoming so obvious that a few black thinkers are beginning to glimpse the promise of the current administration, even though only 9 percent of black Americans voted for Bush. Thomas Sowell is no longer virtually alone in insisting that individual initiative is key to solving black America's remaining problems. Counterbalancing leftist guilt-mongers like Brent Staples and Ishmael Reed, even in the mainstream media, are such thinkers as Stanley Crouch, Debra Dickerson, Ken Hamblin, Clarence Page, William Raspberry, Shelby Steele, and Walter Williams. Many of these thinkers would bill themselves more as moderates than as conservatives, but they all understand that the current administration offers more promise to blacks than blacks suppose.

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Increasing numbers of black ministers are moving toward the Republican philosophy in rebuilding their communities, and a group of them met with Bush early in his administration. These clergymen's truly activist orientation toward solving racial problems is making the tinplate essence of Democratically aligned ministers like Jesse Jackson and Al Sharpton ever clearer. What possible equivalence is there between the brass-tacks honesty and commitment of a Reverend Eugene Rivers of Boston and Reverend Jesse Jackson, who "counseled" Bill Clinton during the Lewinsky scandal, while himself having an affair with an assistant and supporting her and the child he fathered with her with funds contributed to his non-profit organization—which has moved black America ahead not a millimeter over 20 years.

"Black citizens in polls have come out 83 percent in favor of school vouchers and 91 percent in favor of workfare."

Indeed, historians studying this period in American race relations will find themselves grappling with the disjunction between the pronouncements of black "leaders" and the views of ordinary black folk. As Robert L. Woodson Sr. notes in his under-read *The Triumphs of Joseph*, black citizens in polls have come out 83 percent in favor of school vouchers, 47 percent against racial preferences, and 91 percent in favor of workfare. These are not Democratic party responses, and they suggest a return to the guiding principles that animated the civil rights movement before the reign of the victimologist imperative.

It's in this context that the stories we can tell about George Washington Carver make sense. Look back, for instance, to one of Adam Clayton Powell Jr.'s best speeches: "Some of you say to me, 'I'm not like you, I'm not a Congressman, I haven't got education, I haven't got work.' . . . But you're a human being! And you know what you've got? You've got your hand. . . .

"A young slave boy stood one day by the greatest ruler of his day, and God said to Moses, 'What's in your hand?' Moses said only, 'I've got a stick.' He said, 'Well, let me use what's in your hand.' God used that slave boy with a stick in his hand to divide the Red Sea, march through a wilderness, bring water out of rocks, manna from heaven, and bring his people to Freedomland.

"What's in your hand? *What's in your hand?* George Washington Carver was so frail he was traded for a broken-down horse as a slave boy; and George Washington Carver, sitting in his science laboratory at Tuskegee told me, he said, 'Dr. Powell,' he said, 'I just go out in the fields each morning at 5 o'clock, and I let God guide me, and I bring back these little things and work them over in my laboratory.' And that man did more to revolutionize the agriculture science of peanuts, and of cotton, and of sweet potato, than any one human being in the field of agricultural science." That speech would be inconceivable coming from Jackson, who restricts self-empowerment advice to encouraging children to chant, "I am somebody," but who focuses his energy on shaking down corporations for giant payoffs or flying overseas to coddle Slobodan Milosevic and Liberian thug Charles Taylor.

Educated blacks often assert that black Americans hold a wide range of views, that only a fraction embrace professional victimhood. But a race does not express a "range" of opinions by voting, virtually to a man, for one party election after election and restricting approved discourse to variations on how many handouts we need.

Ideally, as many, if not more black Americans would vote Republican as Democratic. A party that respects us—by granting us the human privilege of self-empowerment—is the one that deserves our vote, regardless of whether or not that party gives evidence of thoroughly "liking" us. Our challenge is to achieve for ourselves, whether liked or not. If this is not an "authentically black" position to adopt, then the concept of black "authenticity" has become decidedly too abstract for me to grasp. ■

W. E. B. DuBois (center row, second from right) at the Niagara Conference, where he declared that black America "needs justice and is given charity."

THE GRANGER COLLECTION

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Illiberal Liberalism

Liberals used to be the staunchest advocates of reasoned, civil debate. No more. Now it's argument by name-calling.

Brian C. Anderson

It's hard not to notice that political discussion over the last decade has increasingly degenerated into name-calling—and that the insults most often come from the left: "racist," "homophobe," "sexist," "mean-spirited," "insensitive." It has become a habit of left-liberal political argument to use such invective to dismiss conservative beliefs as if they don't deserve an argument and to redefine mainstream conservative arguments as extremism and bigotry. Close-minded and uncivil, this tendency betrays what's liberal in liberalism.

It undermines two principles crucial to liberal democracy and central to its superiority to other forms of government. Democracy requires a willingness to engage civilly with those you disagree with, recognizing their equality as citizens. Social thinker Michael Novak calls this democratic etiquette the "amity and equanimity proper to a civilized people." To be sure, this noble ideal inevitably takes its knocks in the bruised-knuckle world of real politics; as Frederick Douglass once pointed out, those who look for politics to be unfailingly polite "want rain without thunder and lightning." But calling someone a

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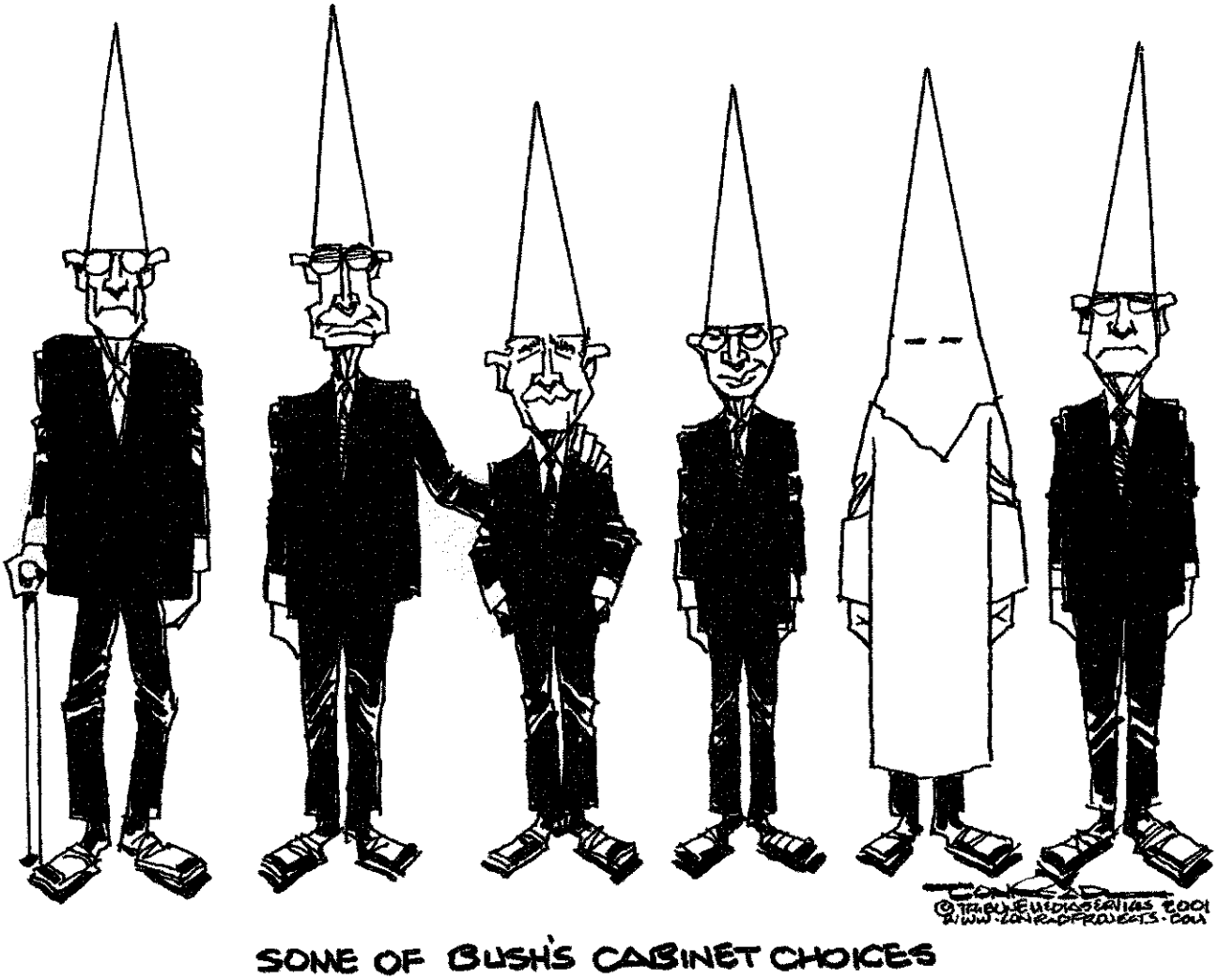

Nowadays, it's not just leftish political cartoonists like these who deal in grossly exaggerated, broad-brush caricatures of their opponents—it's leftish pundits, professors, and philosophers, too.

racist or a bigot says that his ideas have no place in the democratic public square. It's an annihilating gesture, appropriately directed against a David Duke or a Khallid Muhammad, not against the principled beliefs of your conservative fellow citizens.

The second ingredient of liberal democracy that such illiberalism denies is a belief in the superiority of reasoned argument over force. The very first paragraph of *The Federalist Papers* made reason central to the American political project: "[I]t seems to have been reserved to the people of this country, by their conduct and example," wrote Alexander Hamilton, "to decide the important question, whether societies of men are really capable or not of establishing good government from *reflection* and *choice*, or whether they are forever destined to depend for their political constitutions on accident and force." Without reflection—reason—politics degenerates into tyranny or mob rule, the Founders believed. For them, name-calling and dismissing the views of your fellow citizens out of hand are the tactics of the mob.

Liberals once incarnated reason and civility. John Locke, liberalism's father, held that "the right improvement and exercise of our reason . . . [is] the highest perfection that a man can attain to in this life." He viewed civility—"that general good will and regard for all people which makes anyone have a care not to show in his carriage any contempt, disrespect, or neglect of them"—as the Number One social virtue. Liberalism's most prominent nineteenth-century spokesman, John Stuart Mill, gave canonical expression to the notion that the reasoned, civil exchange of

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LEFT: SIGNE WILKINSON/CARTOONISTS & WRITERS SYNDICATE

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ideas is how we get at the truth. And the great twentieth-century liberal thinker Lionel Trilling, whose profound writings emanate an urbane civility that is at the furthest remove from name-calling, invoked the words of one of his own teachers as the true liberal ethic—"the moral obligation to be intelligent." Like Mill before him, Trilling thought liberals needed to engage deeply with liberalism's conservative critics to keep their ideas sharp and true. Tellingly, little of his work remains in print.

In recent public discussion, liberals haven't engaged in much reasoned argument with conservatives or shown much civility toward them. Consider, for instance, how today's left—from mainstream Democratic politicians to far-out radicals—has conducted itself in the debate over affirmative action. Conservatives argue that racial preferences for blacks contravene the basic American ideal that all people should be treated equally under the law—the ideal that inspired the original civil rights movement. Moreover, racial preferences penalize non-blacks who have committed no wrong, conservatives say, and they end up harming blacks by demoralizing and stigmatizing them as somehow in need of special help to get ahead. You might disagree with these ideas, but they're principled, coherent, and democratic. Yet liberals merely dismiss them, and those who hold them, as racist.

A couple of years ago, for example, then-vice president Al Gore gave a speech to an NAACP convention that perfectly embodies the typical liberal response to criticism of racial preferences. "I've heard the critics of affirmative action," Gore said. "They use their 'color blind' the way duck hunters use a duck blind—they hide behind it and hope the ducks won't notice." *Boston Globe* columnist Jeff Jacoby incredulously responded: "Hunters use a duck blind to kill ducks. What can Gore be saying? That affirmative action's critics want to kill—blacks?" Apparently so, for Gore went on in the speech to demand to know the reaction of racial-preference opponents to a horrendous crime in Virginia, in which a black man "was doused with gasoline, burned alive, and decapitated by two men."

Not a week goes by without a prominent liberal stooping to this tactic. "[Liberals'] efforts to . . . stereotype their adversaries as racists have become so routine as to seem unremarkable," laments *The National Journal*'s Stuart Taylor, Jr. Out of hundreds of examples, a few drawn from the last half decade will have to suffice. President Clinton compared the promoters of the California Civil Rights Initiative—the ultimately successful 1996 ballot measure banning discrimination on the basis of race or sex in state programs—with segregationists. Christopher Edley, a Harvard law professor who served as President Clinton's key advisor on race, referred to Abigail and Stephan Thernstrom's measured 1997 book *America in Black and White* as a "crime against humanity" for its anti-preferences stance. The late columnist Carl Rowen accused conservative opponents of affirmative action of "apoplectic spasms of bigotry"—as if Bill Bennett and Bull Connor were interchangeable. "Conservative legal groups," asserted Atlanta's black mayor Bill Campbell a few years back, are "a homogenized version of the Klan. . . . They may have traded in their sheets for suits, but it's the same old racism."

Today's liberal left discovers racism not just behind opposition to racial preferences but behind most conservative ideas and policy recommendations. When the Newt Gingrich–led Republicans wanted to cut taxes and pursue welfare reform in the mid-nineties, the *New York Times* excoriated Gingrich for his "race-based, anger-charged politics" and compared him to southern segregationist George Wallace. Harlem's Democratic congressman Charles Rangel attacked Republican tax cuts as pure race hatred. "It's not 'spic' or 'nigger' anymore," Rangel growled. "They say, 'Let's cut taxes.' " More recently, speaking on ABC's *This Week*, feminist and high-paid Gore consultant Naomi Wolf casually accused George W. Bush's advisors—by whom she meant *City Journal*'s editor—of being "racist." Wolf's evidence? The truthful observation that some members of the underclass, because of their dysfunctional worldview, ignore the economic opportunities blossoming all around them.

These charges, it's crucial to note, represent a significant expansion of the idea of racism. Racism once meant thinking about and treating members of a given race as essentially, biologically, inferior. But such bigotry, as *The End of Racism* author Dinesh D'Souza points out, "has been morally discredited; few people admit to it." To keep the idea of racism alive—and not coincidentally to provide work for civil rights

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activists—the left has had to invent a new, amorphous type of racism that "must be inferred," in D'Souza's words, from one's positions on issues. The new racism comes down to this: if you oppose the left's policies, on racial preferences or on anything else that affects blacks, you must be out to harm black Americans. The Democrats' campaign in January to derail the nomination of John Ashcroft as the nation's new attorney general drew freely on this expansive conception of racism, though liberals couched it in different rhetoric, saying that the former Missouri senator was "insensitive" toward blacks.

A related charge that conservatives often hear from liberals is that, whatever they might say, they're really mean-spirited white people whose goal is to make the rich richer at the expense of the poor, the black, and the helpless—especially kids. Such attacks reached a fever pitch after Republicans won the House of Representatives in 1994. "What [conservative Republicans] want to do," President Clinton said, "is make war on the kids of this country." On NBC's *Today Show*, to take another example, left-leaning host Bryant Gumbel asked liberal children's advocate Marian Wright Edelman a classic leading question: "In light of the new welfare-reform bill, do you think the children need more prayers than ever before?" Former Democratic New York governor Mario Cuomo evoked the image of "Republican storm-troopers." Another New York Democrat, Congressman Major Owens, went further: "These are the people," he thundered, "who are practicing genocide with a smile: they're worse than Hitler." The ideas that the Gingrich Republicans stood for—limited government, welfare reform, tax cuts, deregulation—don't seem to have all that much to do with Nazism and the Holocaust. But in the political rhetoric of today's liberals, fine distinctions often get lost.

Such indictments exhibit neither the reflection nor the civility appropriate to a free society. And note that it's not just fired-up activists talking this way. It's the liberal, Democratic party mainstream: the president and vice president, the nation's paper of record, key presidential advisors, TV hosts, influential congressmen, and other top office holders.

"It's not 'spic' or 'nigger' anymore, Congressman Rangel growled. They say, 'Let's cut taxes.'"

The left's effort to push conservative opinions outside the realm of acceptable discourse takes on even greater force in cultural disagreements like the controversy over homosexuality. For liberals, fighting for homosexual rights is the moral equivalent of the fight for civil rights for blacks, so that anyone who opposes, say, gay marriage or who supports the Boy Scouts' freedom not to hire homosexual scoutmasters is a bigot—end of story. But it's one thing to say that all men are created equal and quite another to hold that all forms of sexual behavior are morally equivalent.

The most conspicuous recent example of this effort to discredit conservative views on homosexual behavior is the campaign by gay activists to shut down Laura Schlessinger's Paramount-produced television show. "Dr. Laura," an Orthodox Jew who accepts the biblical proscription of homosexual acts, contends that homosexuals have a right to "respect and kindness" but that homosexual sex is "deviant" behavior. Leading religious thinkers and moral philosophers have taken precisely that view for thousands of years; but that didn't stop gay activists from making Dr. Laura out to be the "Queen of Hate Radio." Their vehement propaganda campaign succeeded in pressuring major corporations like Procter & Gamble and American Express to withdraw their prospective ads—in effect endorsing the view that traditional sexual mores are now taboo. Dr. Laura's TV show is still on the air, though it has suffered from weak ratings and will likely not be renewed.

One further example. The Claremont Institute, a respected California-based conservative think tank, and the National Association for Research and Therapy of Homosexuality set off an enormous controversy when they invited to a Los Angeles conference on the legal and medical status of homosexuality a group of conservative political thinkers and psychiatrists who

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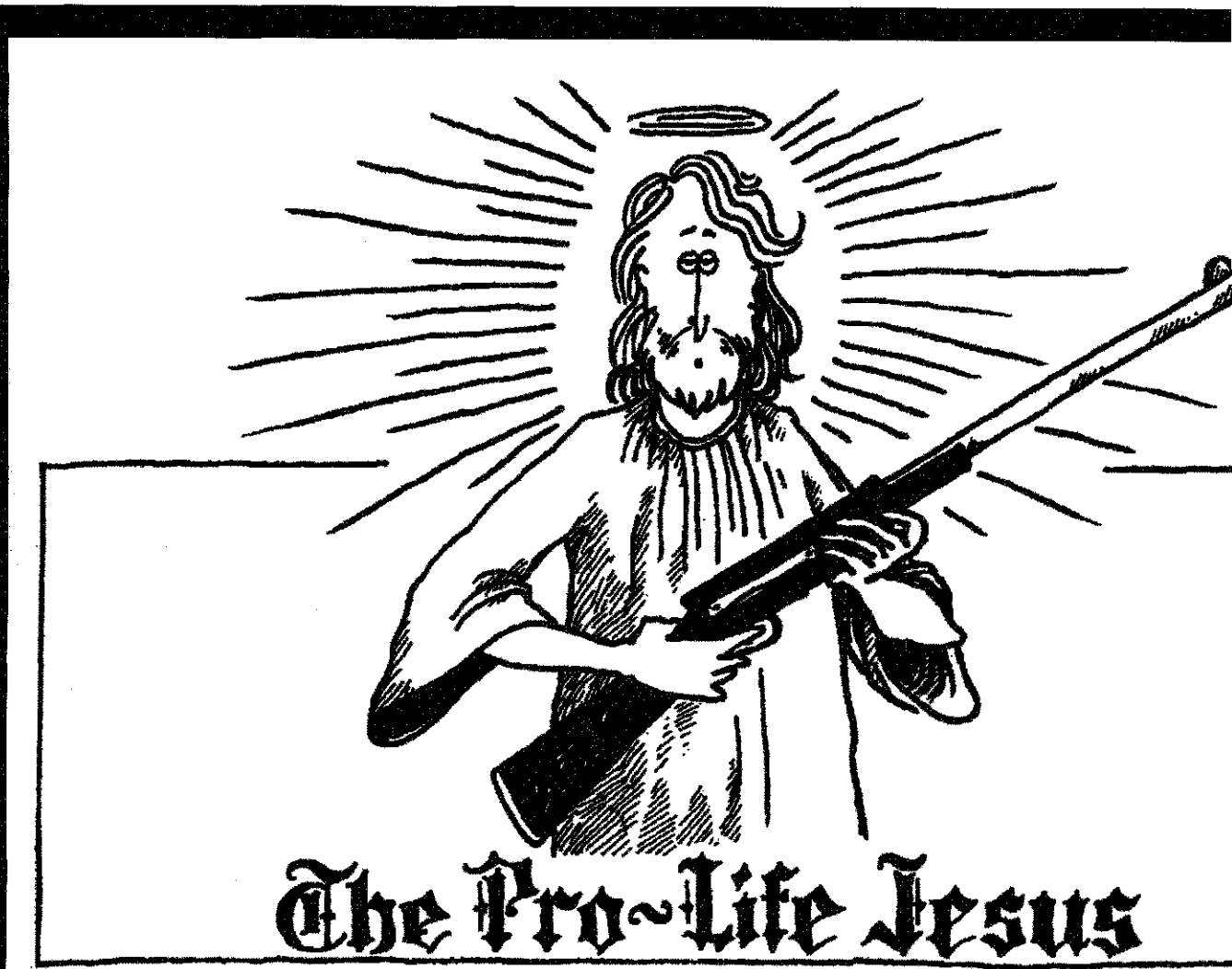
don't accept the idea that homosexuality is genetically determined—a key tenet of homosexual-rights activists. Without bothering to inquire, the Los Angeles City Council rushed to condemn the conference as an exercise in "defamation and demonization." As conference participant Hadley Arkes, a well-known Amherst political scientist, later put it: "A moral tradition running back to Athens (yes Athens) and Jerusalem was now pronounced as nothing less than unspeakable in Los Angeles." The Beverly Hilton hotel, the original site for the conference, backed out after receiving menacing calls, forcing the organizers to move to a braver hotel.

Liberals claim that conservatives who criticize homosexual behavior as immoral or deviant create a "hostile climate" that leads to gay bashing. Shortly after the brutal murder of homosexual Matthew Shepard by actual gay-bashers, Jonathan Alter of



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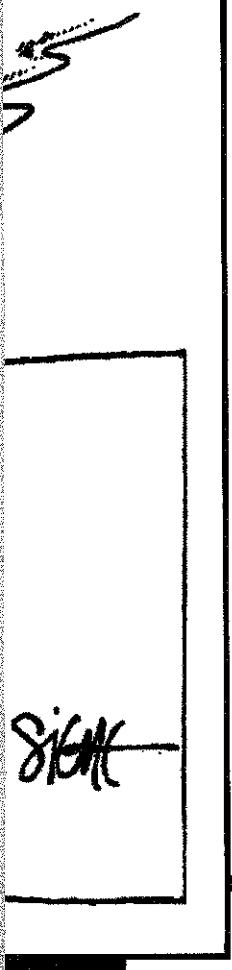

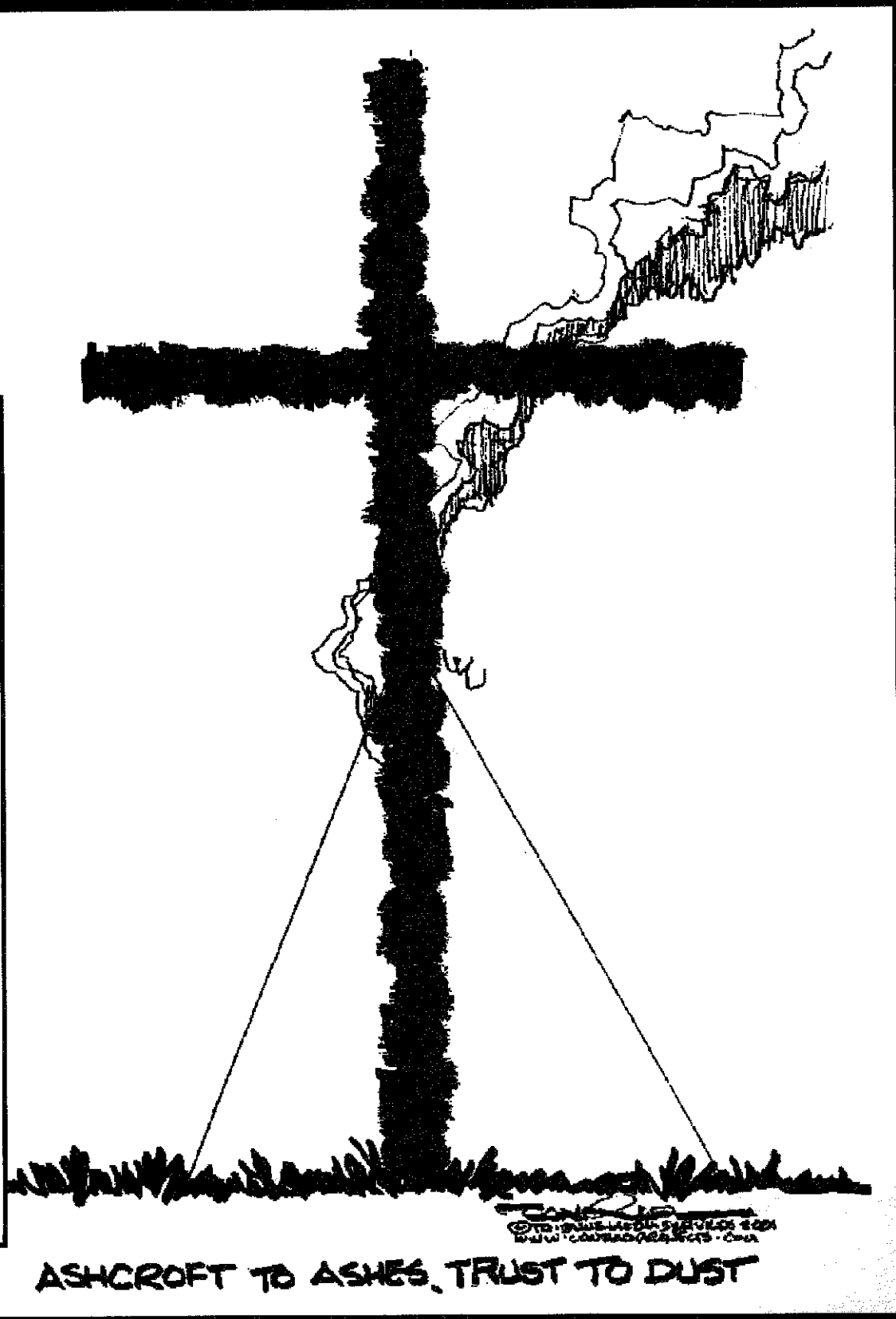

ASHCROFT TO ASHES, TRUST TO DUST

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Newsweek sought to blame all moral conservatives for the crime. "[J]ust as white racists created a climate for lynching blacks, just as hate radio created a climate for militias, so the constant degrading of homosexuals is exacting a toll in blood," Alter charged. "Discerning clergymen and moralists can hate the sin and love the sinner," he continued, "but by the time the homophobic message reaches the angry guys sitting in the bar, the distinction has been lost."

If all Alter was saying is that conservatives should strive to be civil in making their arguments about homosexual behavior, then he'd find few serious conservative thinkers or politicians who'd disagree with him. His real meaning, though, is that anyone espousing traditional views should just be quiet. Like most of today's left, Alter rejects Voltaire's famous dictum: "I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it."

The left's position on homosexuality is no longer about winning tolerance for it but about getting everyone to celebrate it as just one more perfectly normal sexual life-style. The easy assumptions Alter makes are illustrative: that conservative criticism of homosexual behavior is "degrading," for example, or that the moral teachings of, say, the Catholic Church, are "homophobic"—an expression of mental illness, in other words. The British writer Melanie Phillips, no conservative, sees in such casual assertions a breathtaking illiberalism and inversion of traditional values. A "homophobe," she recently observed, is now "[a]nyone who believes that sexual orientation should remain a private matter and who deplores the intimidation of those who wish to keep it so."

Abortion is another cultural controversy in which liberals simply try to silence conservative views—sometimes quite crudely. As former Democratic senator Patricia Schroeder put it when criticizing abortion opponents: "We don't want to see that kind of goose-stepping over women's rights." The "hostile climate" charge gets a frequent workout in this context, too. The *Washington Post*'s Richard Cohen, in a 1997 column entitled "When Morality Begets Violence," blamed the "language of the anti-abortion movement, a piece of it anyway," with inciting bombings at abortion clinics. "Wherever there is a connection to abortion, there is always the possibility of violence," he claimed. Polly Rothstein of the Westchester Coalition for Legal Abortion all but blamed the pope and other religious leaders for the murder several years back of Barnett Slepian, a Buffalo doctor who performed abortions. They didn't "pull the trigger," she said, but blood "is on the hands" of such figures anyway. As columnist John Leo wisely counsels: "Beware of arguments based on climates or atmospheres. Most of them are simply attempts to disparage opponents and squelch legitimate debate."

This illiberal approach to political debate went into overdrive with liberals' reaction to George W. Bush's close victory over Al Gore in the 2000 presidential race and during the Senate hearings to confirm John Ashcroft as attorney general. Referring to the large swathes of the country that voted for Bush—colored bright red on the newspaper maps—liberal columnist and former Clinton advisor Paul Begala wrote: "You see the state where James Byrd was lynch-dragged behind a pickup truck until his body came apart—it's red. You see where Matthew Shepard was crucified on a split-rail fence for the crime of being gay—it's red. You see the state where right-wing extremists blew up a federal office building and murdered scores of federal employees: red. The state where an army private thought to be gay was bludgeoned to death with a baseball bat, and the state where neo-Nazi skinheads murdered two African-Americans because of their skin color, and the state where Bob Jones University spews its anti-Catholic bigotry: they're red too." Though Begala later claimed that critics had taken his commentary "out of context," its message is clear: conservatives are killers.

In seeking to defeat the Ashcroft nomination, liberals tried to do more than make Ashcroft out to be a racist. Without argument, they sought to relocate the "mainstream" leftward, in order to make any conservative seem well out of it, an extremist. Even ostensible moderate Joe Lieberman exploited this tactic. "On issues ranging from civil rights to privacy rights," Lieberman intoned in voting against his former Senate colleague, "Senator Ashcroft has repeatedly taken positions considerably outside the mainstream of American thinking."

But consider Lieberman's two stated examples: civil rights (read: racial preferences) and privacy rights (read: abortion). Columnist Charles Krauthammer correctly responds: "In a country so divided on these issues, can one seriously argue that opposing abortion and racial preferences is proof of extremism?

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It would be odd indeed if the minority of Americans who believe in racial preferences and the minority who believe in abortion-on-demand were to define the American mainstream." By his own new standard, Lieberman himself was just a short while ago "outside the mainstream" on racial preferences, which he opposed, and on partial-birth abortion, about which he expressed discomfort.

Ironically, the tendency to treat conservative opinions as a form of bigotry and extremism has found its warmest welcome in the seat of liberal learning, which once held sacrosanct the freedom to debate ideas. Obligatory sensitivity sessions inculcating the "correct" attitudes toward feminism, homosexuality, and race; speech codes that punish "inappropriate laughter"; university officials looking away when student activists disrupt a conservative professor's classes; conservative speakers disinvited from campus lectures—by now the litany of college political correctness has become a familiar butt of ridicule, but it still works to banish or silence anything resembling a conservative viewpoint at the nation's universities. "It's the campus leftists who're the real Torquemadas today," judges civil libertarian Nat Hentoff.

"The tendency to treat conservative opinions as a form of bigotry finds its warmest welcome in the seat of liberal learning."

Hentoff has brought to national attention one example that can stand for thousands. A little while back, a conservative Cornell University student newspaper published a parody of Ebonics—an African-American dialect that a handful of educational theorists and activists ill-advisedly thought should be taught in inner-city schools as the equivalent of standard English. Student activists stole 200 copies of the offending paper and torched them in a bonfire. "There was no public criticism by members of the administration or the faculty of this transmogrification of the principle of free inquiry," Hentoff complained. When emboldened vandals stole 500 copies of another edition of the paper and burned them, too, Cornell's dean of students actually stood in front of the bonfire with the offending students. A university spokesman, Hentoff reported, called the burning "symbolic"—and added that Cornell respects both the right to publish and the right to protest.

It's not just the administrators and student groups on campus who view conservative arguments as beneath contempt. Highbrow philosophers do it too. As far back as the 1960s, neo-Marxist guru Herbert Marcuse anticipated much in today's illiberal liberalism. His Orwellian idea of "liberating tolerance" could serve as the official philosophy of the contemporary liberal left. Old-fashioned liberal tolerance—freedom of speech, say, or freedom of association—is "repressive," Marcuse argued, since it just props up the old power structure. "Liberating tolerance," on the other hand, "would mean intolerance against movements from the Right, and toleration of movements from the Left." It is, as a Hentoff book title tartly puts it, "freedom of speech for me—but not for thee."

The most influential liberal philosopher of the last 30 years, Harvard University's John Rawls, takes a similar tack. Rawls doesn't openly endorse Marcusian coercion; he claims to be a defender of reason and of liberal freedoms. But in his 1993 *Political Liberalism*, he shows himself to be equally willing to silence conservative opinions. Rawls argues that a free and equal society must base its laws only on "reasonable" views of political justice. And then, in a short footnote, he defines "reasonable" in a way that rules out of bounds any arguments that deny a "mature adult woman" the right to a first-trimester abortion. (Rawls has backed away somewhat from this assertion in the new paperback edition of the book.)

New Republic contributing editor and political theorist Peter Berkowitz asks the decisive question of Rawls and his many followers, who now dominate the teaching of political philosophy: "What kind of guidance for the negotiation of disagreement in a

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democracy can be derived from a conception that by fiat proclaims unreasonable and places beyond the pale of public discussion the considered views of many Catholics, Protestants and Jews, to say nothing of the views of the loyal Democrats who have been made to feel like pariahs in their own party for their principled pro-life positions?" Answer: none.

All you can learn from such a conception is how thoughtlessly dismissive is the contemporary liberal attitude, even at its most intellectual, toward principled conservatism. A recent seminar discussion among liberal philosophy professors on how to deal with moral conflicts over abortion, homosexuality, and pornography shows just how thoughtless. One professor, a disciple of John Stuart Mill, argued that in a free society, traditional values at least needed debate. The others, Rawlsians to a man, responded: No way. "Why should we listen to loons?" one prominent liberal philosopher opined. "We should just crush them."

Even Supreme Court justices have succumbed to this easy, unthinking waving away of venerable con-

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"AND, SO, JEB BUSH'S BOYS IN THE LEGISLATURE GOT TOGETHER IN TALLAHASSEE

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SINNERS! I CAST THEE INTO UTTER DARKNESS!
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servative beliefs as if they were without merit and beneath debate. The 1996 *Romer* v. *Evans* decision is a dispiriting case in point. In striking down Colorado's democratically enacted constitutional provision that homosexuals or bisexuals should not have special rights over and above the rights guaranteed to every citizen, the court opined that objections to homosexual practices were a form of "animus"—agreeing, in a less vociferous way, with the argument of Dr. Laura's gay-activist critics that no American can have a reasoned objection to homosexual behavior. Judge Robert Bork summed up *Romer*'s remarkable implications: "We are on our way to the approval of homosexual conduct, despite the moral objections of most Americans, because the Court views such moral disapproval as nothing more than redneck bigotry."

What's more, since the Court itself gives no reason for singling out homosexual activity as deserving special protection from moral censure—and only moral censure is at issue, since no one is advocating legal proscription—*Romer*'s underlying logic is even more radical than it first appears. In effect, the decision really implies that *any* moral disapproval of *any* consensual sexual behavior is a form of animus—the sixties' libertine ethos of "if it feels good, do it" institutionalized in turgid legal prose. In his dissent, Justice Antonin Scalia blasted the Court for "imposing upon all Americans" the anti-traditional-morality views of a liberal "elite class."

The casual way that Rawls and *Romer* dismiss conservative ideas manifests a remarkable self-satisfaction that possesses many in Scalia's "elite class." They share the spirit of liberal Harvard psychologist Lawrence Kohlberg, whose famous (now hoary) theory of the stages of moral development culminated, comically, with . . . Harvard liberalism. And this unshakable self-complacency reminds us that people don't always (or perhaps even usually) come to the views they hold by study, reason, and reflection. Fashion and stigma play their parts, too—which is why argument by invective can be so effective. Lytton Strachey used to dismiss views that questioned Bloomsbury's anti-bourgeois values with a withering,

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"Oh, *come*!" And many elite communities—Rawls's Cambridge, say, or Manhattan's Upper West Side—are no different from Strachey's Bloomsbury in this respect: it's presumed that you'll have the correct liberal opinions. "Challenge this presumption, and you'll stop getting invited to dinner parties," reports Westchester-dwelling ex-liberal and *City Journal* contributing editor Harry Stein. This mindset more resembles a cult than a Socratic search for the truth.

The liberals' habit of censoring and discrediting conservative views is a holdover from the 1960s' New Left, whose style and ideology had a profound influence in the late sixties and early seventies on the Democratic party and on many who now call themselves liberals. The New Left divided the political world into "the good inside and the monstrous outside," in the words of political scientist Richard Ellis, author of an important study on radicalism in America. The radicals were the good guys working for a radiant future of sexual and political emancipation; the bad guys included not only conservatives, the defenders of a supposedly unjust and oppressive society, but also the fuddy-duddy liberals, whose belief in reason and civility made them weak-kneed accomplices of the irredeemably corrupt conservatives.

If you see politics as a struggle between absolute good and absolute evil, then it's easy, if you're on the right side of history, to start calling your opponents names: "fascist" was the approved epithet of the sixties, equivalent to "racist" today or "communist" in the mouth of Senator Joe McCarthy. It's easy, too, to start rationalizing away unprincipled behavior within your own ranks. "If the other side is a group of barbarians," *The New Republic*'s Peter Berkowitz says, "it justifies the shameless behavior: 'if we don't cheat, and steal, and lie,' the liberals think, 'then George W. Bush and John Ashcroft are going to be running the country.' " After all, as Al Gore put it during the presidential race, the election was really about whether "good overcomes evil."

What confirmed the liberals in this unamiable habit was their success in keeping Robert Bork off the Supreme Court in 1987. The left hated Bork's uniformly conservative views but couldn't hope to defeat his nomination by saying he was unqualified intellectually—an absurd charge, given his formidable scholarly credentials. Nor could they presume to argue rationally that his conservative views had no place in the public debate. Instead, they engaged in the higher name-calling. Says columnist Charles Krauthammer: "A new charge was minted which became the basis for his rejection by the Senate: He was 'out of the mainstream,' a political extremist unfit to hold higher office." This was nonsense. Bork might have been at the right end of the spectrum, but he was emphatically within mainstream constitutional scholarship—until the hearings succeeded in demonizing his views and sinking the nomination, by invective, not by argument. The left's victory was so stunning that it actually gave us a new verb, "Bork: to attack viciously a candidate or appointee, especially by misrepresentation in the media," as columnist William Safire defines it.

Thereafter, Borking became the prevailing style of Democrats and left-liberal advocates in political debate. It wouldn't succeed, of course, if the press didn't go along with it, and doubtless this free ride makes even supposedly centrist Democrats like Joe Lieberman and Al Gore all too willing to play the racist-sexist-homophobe game. But politics by invective is a double-edged weapon. Intelligent people will ultimately stop believing these accusations. "[T]he saturation point has long been reached for hysterical, rote charges about racism, sexism, and homophobia," observes culture critic Camille Paglia. And then the question will be whether the name-callers have any real ideas below the invective.

More important, such tactics play with fire. When Democrats rancorously charge that conservative ideas create a "climate" that nurtures violence, they should remember that civil, rational debate, rather than demagogic name-calling, is precisely what the theorists of democracy understood to be the mild climate that is our best safeguard against extremists.

In his recent call for a return to "civil discourse," President Bush is decisively rejecting this name-calling from the left. Though we have profound differences, he is saying, we have to reason about them civilly instead of dismissing, insulting, and demonizing one another. Our fellow citizens deserve the presumption of goodwill and good reasons.

These are democratic norms, eminently liberal norms—and liberals need to remember them. ■

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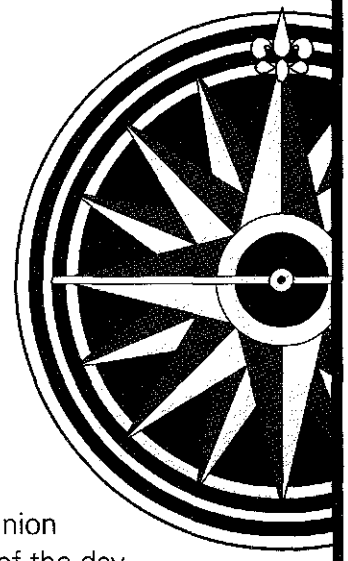

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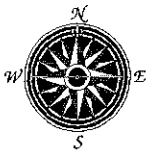

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New York's Republican Crack-Up

Steven Malanga

In 1994, Empire State Republicans were on top of the world. Then—through cowardice, lack of principle, and disunity—they blew it.

When George Pataki swept to victory over Mario Cuomo in 1994, it seemed the dawn of a golden age for New York's Republican party. For the first time in a quarter century, the GOP controlled the governor's mansion, the attorney general's office, and the mayoralty of the Empire State's biggest city. Rudy Giuliani was putting a Republican stamp on Gotham with an aggressive agenda of crime control and fiscal restraint. George Pataki quickly gave New York State more of the same with a big income-tax cut and the reinstatement of the death penalty. Confident party leaders ebulliently talked of following up their electoral gains, perhaps even winning back control of the State Assembly, which had been in the hands of the Democrats for 20 years.

Today, the New York Republican party and its agenda are in tatters, and party leaders are on the run. Since 1995, the GOP has lost a U.S. Senate seat, three U.S. congressional districts, the attorney-generalship of the state, two seats in the State Senate, two seats in the State Assembly, and control of the once unassailably Republican Westchester and Nassau county legislatures. True, the party kept the governorship in 1998, although by a worryingly narrow majority against a weak Democratic challenger. But last November, Republicans fared truly dismally. Al Gore carried New York State in the 2000 presidential election by a wider margin than Lyndon Johnson piled up in the landslide year 1964. Hillary Clinton won her Senate seat with a muscular nine-point margin. The party continued to lose ground in the Assembly and at the county level. It now seems almost impossible that a Republican will succeed Rudy Giuliani in New York City Hall and increasingly doubtful that the Republicans will retain the governor's mansion in 2002.

How did the party get into this mess? Not because it succumbed to Gingrichian "extremism." Quite the reverse: it has spent lavishly, resisted broad tax cuts, shunned tort reform, championed environmental regulation, overpaid government employees, and emitted bonds with the glad-handed profusion of a Russian central banker.

In short, time and again the New York Republican party has abandoned its core message—the message of fiscal restraint, small government, and deregulation that got Pataki elected. Each time, the party has justified its surrender in the name of survival. Its strategists have promised that this "moderation"—which is the term they use to describe immoderate taxing, spending, and borrowing—would save the party.

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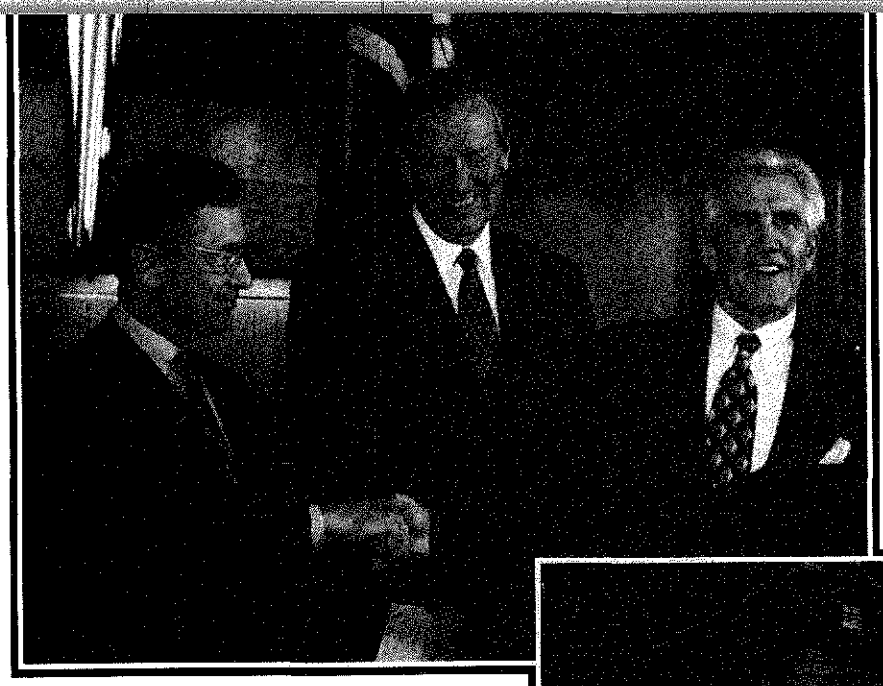
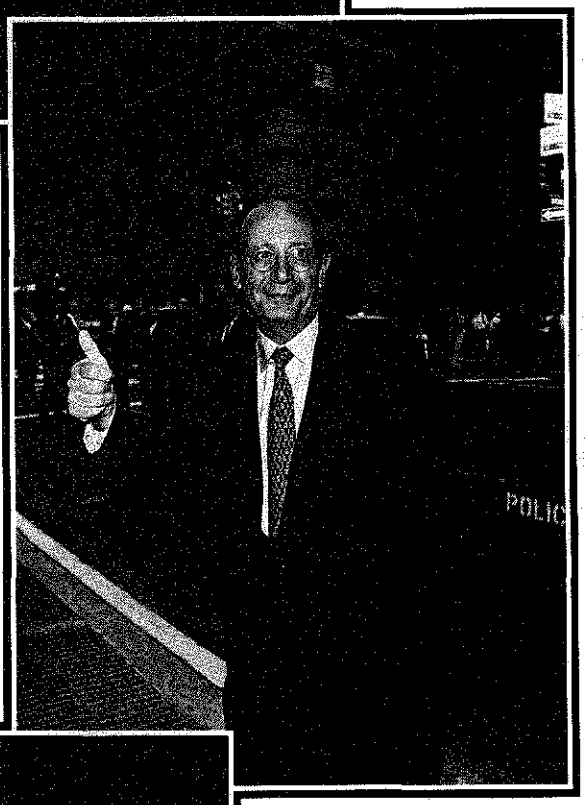
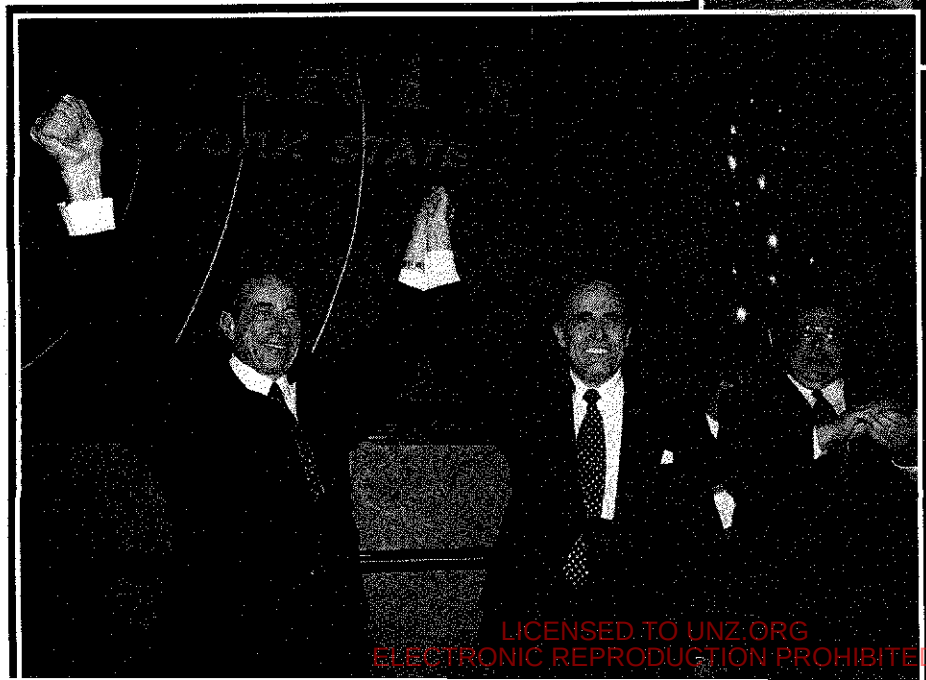




Outward and visible signs of that salvation are, however, difficult to detect. Instead, the party seems determined to ensure that it not only loses power, but loses it unlamented by its supporters. It's an awfully sad conclusion to a story that commenced so hopefully in 1994.

Back then, George Pataki appeared to have dragged the party of Nelson Rockefeller into the era of Ronald Reagan at last. New York State has never really recovered from Rockefeller's costly four terms, and neither had the New York Republican party. Just as Rocky rebuilt Albany to suit his tastes—and damn the costs—so he remodeled his party. Out went the reactionary patricians of the Union League, out went the stalwarts who remembered Boss Platt, out went the working-class



New York's Republicans habitually make catastrophic deals with the state's Democrats. Above, Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver, Governor Pataki, and Senate President Joseph Bruno congratulate one another on a profligate health-care bill; Senator Alfonse D'Amato aligned with trial lawyers, unionists, and environmentalists in his last—failed—reelection bid; New York mayor Rudy Giuliani fractured the party by endorsing Governor Mario Cuomo, below.

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Catholics who would later vote for Barry Goldwater for president and William Buckley for mayor. Rockefeller left them to the Conservatives down the ballot. He envisaged his Republican party as a modern party—by which he meant a liberal party. In came moral obligation bonds, in came lenient judges and cops, in came the most extravagant state government in the nation.

In time, of course, Rockefeller went out too. He resigned the governorship in December 1973, worn out by the disappointment of his presidential hopes in 1964 and 1968, and then he suffered the terminal humiliation of being dropped from the Republican vice presidential ticket in 1976. His party collapsed behind him. The Republicans had been competitive in both houses of the State Legislature in the 1950s and 1960s, but they lost control of the Assembly in 1974 during the first wave of Watergate-inspired voter rejection of Republicans, and they never regained it. Republican president Ford's refusal to rescue New York City from its financial troubles in 1975 damaged the party downstate, where the population was growing; the economic stagnation upstate depopulated the regions where the party retained its popularity; and in 1974 the Democrats won back the governorship they had lost to Rockefeller in 1958. They would keep it for almost 20 years.

During those two decades in the wilderness, the Republicans retained one last redoubt: the State Senate. But a defeated and dispirited lot those state senators were. Underneath them was an overwhelmingly Democratic Assembly, whose procedures grind the objections of the minority into powder. ("We have the right to show up," quips Assembly minority leader John Faso, "the right to vote—and that's about it.") Above them was the overwhelming power of one of the constitutionally strongest governorships in the country.

Perhaps the Republican senators could have put up stiffer resistance. But their ranks were filled with holdovers from Rockefellerism, along with a new generation of free-spending suburban legislators blissfully out of touch with the small-government Republicanism of Ronald Reagan. New York's GOP remained a party of big spenders, who simply sought to consume tax dollars differently from the way their Democratic brethren did. They acceded to the Democrats' demands for more spending on welfare, mass transit, Medicaid, and the City University of New York in return for more spending on roads, agriculture, suburban school districts, and the State University of New York. When it came to spending New Yorkers' hard-earned dollars, the state had no opposition party.

Nothing epitomized this pattern more than the reign of Senate president Ralph Marino, a product of the Nassau Republican machine, who guided the party from 1988 through 1994, when he was deposed by the newly elected Governor Pataki. For three straight years—from 1989 through 1991, while the economy slipped into recession—Marino's Senate voted with the Democratic Assembly to increase taxes by more than $1 billion annually. So profligate was the combination that it was often left to Governor Cuomo (of all people) to restrain the legislators' spending sprees, as he did in 1991, when he used his line-item veto to cut hundreds of millions of dollars in legislative programs.

The longer the Senate and Assembly collaborated, the more fixed the mentality of collaboration grew. An entire generation of Republican senators watched their party endure electoral defeat after defeat for state government offices. They cringed under the bullying and lecturing of Mario Cuomo and learned to live on the crumbs the Democrats left them in exchange for their willingness to be co-conspirators in the tax-and-spend follies.

It is possible to grow quite fat on crumbs, as Tom Wolfe pointed out in *The Bonfire of the Vanities*; but this is not a life that attracts true leaders. By 1990, the party was so devoid of talent that it had to scramble to come up with a nominee for governor. It settled on an obscure and cranky business economist named Pierre Rinfret, who had two—and only two—qualifications: he was not pro-life and party leaders (mistakenly) believed that he could and would pay for his campaign himself.

And here the party hit bottom. The press quickly exposed as false Rinfret's claim to have earned a Ph.D. in economics at the University of Dijon. Rinfret finished almost 20 points behind Cuomo and barely ahead of the Conservative candidate, New York University professor Herb London. Some believe

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that he would have finished behind London had not a substantial minority of the electorate mistaken him for a former New York Rangers goalie. Most fatally, he bequeathed to the party a $2 million debt just as the state's economy was sliding into its donation-crimping recession.

That same recession turned out to be the salvation of the Republican parties of the northeast. The region's economies had been underperforming for years, New York's worst of all. So long as the national prosperity of the 1980s lasted, it disguised the states' woes. The 1990–92 slump ripped the disguise away from the reality of decline. Quite suddenly, the least conservative region of the country began to respond to conservative themes. In 1990, William Weld won the governorship of Massachusetts on a tax-cutting, prosperity-restoring platform. Christine Whitman carried New Jersey with an even more ambitious tax-cutting plan in 1993.

"New York's GOP simply sought to consume tax dollars differently from the way their Democratic brethren did."

That same year Rudy Giuliani won the mayoralty of New York City, Gotham's first Republican mayor since John Lindsay's election in 1965. But if Lindsay had swept to City Hall as a liberal Republican and then abandoned the party altogether, Giuliani's brand of Republicanism was even odder. His chief political ally was Liberal party boss Ray Harding, and, although Giuliani began his tenure with recognizably Republican fiscal restraint and toughness on crime, he capped off 1994 by endorsing Cuomo over Pataki, observing that the Democrat's free-spending ways would benefit the city more.

In the end, Giuliani's endorsement mattered little, because nowhere was there more potential for a resurgent Republicanism than in New York State. Nearly one-third (29.7 percent) of all the jobs lost in the country in 1990–92 had been lost in New York State. The state's tax burden was the heaviest in the country after oil-rich Alaska (which extracted its taxes in the painless form of excise levies on the production of natural resources). Liberal criminal laws were exporting urban violence and disorder outward to communities like Hempstead and White Plains. Then the man who had sown the unfolding disaster, Governor Cuomo, made the arrogant mistake of seeking to match Nelson Rockefeller's four-term record. In November 1994, the voters of New York repudiated him, replacing him with the little-known state senator who promised to restrain state spending and cut taxes—tardily bringing to New York the Reagan revolution.

At first, those promises were kept. The new governor pushed the legislature to cut personal income-tax rates by 25 percent, to remove the emergency corporate surcharge imposed in Cuomo's final term, to phase out the gross-receipts tax on energy use, and to soften the alternative minimum tax. The state budget fell for the first time since the fiscal crises of the 1970s. It was an impressive accomplishment—but a short-lived one.

"I want to be Christie Whitman," Pataki had told supporters. It was an aspiration with a double meaning, for like Whitman, Pataki was not a tax cutter by conviction. He saw his 1995 tax-reform package as a drastic emergency measure to reinvigorate an ailing economy, much the way a man with heart disease might regard a bypass operation. When a bypass succeeds, however, the patient does not rush out to have a second, and Pataki seems to have thought the same way about further doses of conservatism. One was unavoidable; two, quite redundant.

His anti-conservative instincts quickly became unmistakable. In early 1996, he crisscrossed the state, stumping for an environmental bond act, which his polls showed that voters supported. His political godfather, U.S. Senator Alfonse D'Amato, leaped into the campaign, raising hundreds of thousands of dollars for ads supporting the bond act and starring . . . him. Together, the state's two top Republicans, with the support of Democratic unions,

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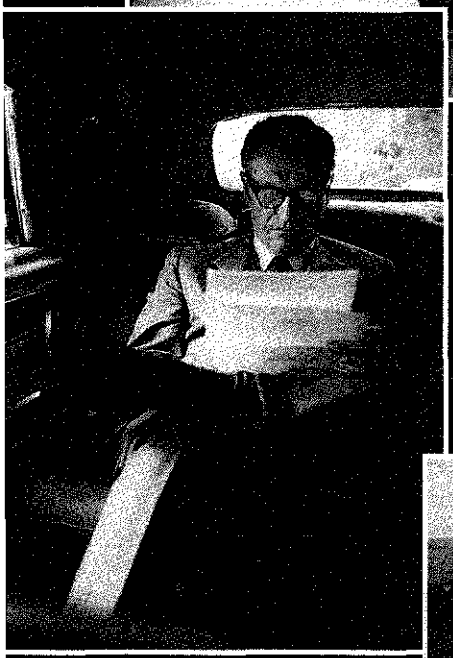

Former governor Nelson Rockefeller (center) remade Albany and the New York GOP in his own image. Representative Rick Lazio (above, right) took upstate voters for granted in his race against Hillary Clinton.

environmentalists, and editorial boards, succeeded where Mario Cuomo had failed in 1990 to win voter approval of borrowing for environmental projects, despite the state's already stratospheric debt.

At the time, it seemed like a brilliant political strategy, confirmed by the dismal showing of the national Republican candidates in 1996. The national anti-tax agenda on which Pataki had floated into power evaporated. Bob Dole, who had promised a 15 percent tax cut—and had even put a New Yorker, Jack Kemp, on a Republican ticket for the first time since 1948—won less than one-third of the Empire State's votes.

From that point on, the policy of the Pataki administration was one long retreat. Environmental protection displaced tort reform. Pataki never sent the legislature another income-tax cut. Instead, the legislature enacted, and the governor signed, a list of micro-cuts that read like the Christmas wish list of an Albany lobbyist: reductions in excise taxes on

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beer; reductions in taxes on pari-mutuel betting, on diesel fuel, on clothing sales, on municipal parking, on alternative-fuel vehicles, on coin-operated telephones, and on sales of supplies for theatrical productions. On social issues, the man who had once scourged Mario Cuomo as "too liberal, too long" repositioned himself as a champion of homosexual rights and as a stalwart of affirmative action.

Not surprisingly, Pataki's repositioning left some of his original backers twisting slowly, slowly in the wind—above all Senate president Joseph Bruno, an upstate businessman with strong free-market instincts, whom the governor had backed to replace Marino. In late 1996, Bruno had resolved to end the state-legislated system of rent regulations in New York City, up for renewal the next year, and he got Pataki's tacit approval of his plan. To succeed, Bruno and Pataki just had to do nothing, and the law would expire. It was a worthy, quintessentially Republican, goal: market-distorting rent regulations notoriously discouraged new housing construction in the city, saddling New York with inflated rents and a perpetual housing shortage.

But as Pataki came under heavy pressure from rent regulations' outraged beneficiaries, he cravenly capitulated, betraying Bruno and embracing a deal to renew the regulations. The reason for the surrender: Senator D'Amato. Furiously trying to reposition himself as a moderate for his reelection race in 1998, the state's most powerful Republican leaned on Pataki and Bruno when Democrats threatened to run ads accusing him of being the real anti-rent-control grinch.

This slide toward the center was standard operating procedure for the senator from Nassau County, who more than anyone came to define the unprincipled capriciousness of the state Republican party. D'Amato had come to power in 1980 on the strength of the Reagan revolution, appealing to the new forces within the Republican party, especially ethnic conservatives, who rejected the politics of the liberal Republican senator Jacob Javits. But despite his conservative beginnings, D'Amato turned out to be ever the trimmer, lurching toward the center whenever he thought that it would win votes or money. Facing reelection in 1992, for instance, the senator soon learned that to pump up his ratings from liberal and Democratic-backed groups like the AFL-CIO and the Consumer Federation of America, all he had to do was embrace issues that they endorsed. Then, after the Republicans scored heavily in the midterm congressional elections of 1994, he zigzagged back toward conservative positions, only to move left again, under the influence of his own political advisor, Republican strategist Arthur Finkelstein, as the tide turned against Bob Dole in 1996.

"D'Amato was ever the trimmer, lurching toward the center whenever he thought that it would win votes or money."

Leading up to his reelection bid in 1998, D'Amato had shifted positions more times than an NFL wide-receiver. His allies in the preceding years had variously included trial lawyers, hospital-workers unionist Dennis Rivera, and environmentalists. Still, D'Amato's calculating shift leftward was unavailing. When the Democrats nominated a credible candidate to oppose him—Congressman Chuck Schumer—D'Amato's newfound friends rushed back into the Democratic fold.

D'Amato's defeat only seemed to inspire his former protégé to run away from Republicanism ever more vigorously, carrying with him the party whose leader he became upon D'Amato's departure. Nothing exemplified that shift more starkly than the alliance that Pataki and the formerly staunch conservative Bruno made with health care union leader Rivera in 1999. Three years earlier, Pataki had resolved to deregulate the state's bloated and outdated health-care system, one of only two in the country that set rates for hospitals. To ease the transition to a competitive system, he offered hospitals more than $1 billion in subsidies, including huge surcharges on private insurance.

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The transitional subsidies were set to expire at the end of 1999, to the great relief of businesses, insurers, and counties that paid steep Medicaid bills. But Rivera, loaded with more than $10 million in political action money, ran hysterical TV ads warning of an impending health-care crisis if the subsidies vanished and if the governor pushed for more extensive health-care reform than the modest change he had effected in 1996. Pataki gave in. Together with Bruno, Rivera, and left-wing Assembly majority leader Sheldon Silver, he worked out a plan that maintained the subsidies, hijacked several hundred million dollars per year in tobacco-settlement money earmarked for the state's counties, and vastly expanded the Medicaid system. In return for their largesse, the two Republicans got one big favor: worried that the party's fortunes were slipping so much that they might lose control of the State Senate in the 2000 elections, they persuaded Rivera, with his huge war chest, to stay out of local races.

With the Rivera deal, the Republicans had come full circle, after the brief shining moment of 1994 and 1995. Once again, the state GOP was a party with little use for ideas and little trust in principles, except the principle of self-preservation. A historic opportunity had been squandered.

The fate of the Nassau county GOP organization—a perfect embodiment, almost to the point of caricature, of the party's unprincipled politics—should serve as a warning to Republicans across the state. Republicans held majority control of the Nassau legislature uninterruptedly since the formation of the county in 1899; their control of the executive was broken only briefly by an eight-year Democratic interregnum in the 1960s. Over that century, the Nassau GOP built one of America's last favor-dispensing political machines. Everything from summer lifeguarding jobs to government contracts was steeped in patronage. Most taxpayers understood that the machine was costly, but few understood how costly, thanks in large part to the county's archaic and opaque property-tax assessment system.

But then the machine ran out of gas. Although Nassau is one of the nation's richest counties, its economy took it on the chin in the early 1990s, as Grumman, its biggest employer, shrank rapidly, along with the rest of the county's high-tech defense industry. Rather than impose fiscal discipline, Nassau's profligate Republicans, led by county executive Thomas Gulotta and county GOP chairman Joseph Mondello, continued to shovel out money, using fiscal tricks to mask budget woes. Favored constituencies reaped rich rewards; the pay of the county police, who strongly backed Republican leaders, rose 60 percent during the 1990s, for example, and by decade's end the average compensation of a Nassau cop was $114,000 a year. The county borrowed to pay for ordinary operating expenses, like road repairs; it issued a staggering $3.2 billion in debt over ten years—$2,447 for every resident.

Finally in 1999 the whole fiscal edifice collapsed: the county faced an immediate shortfall of $80 million and a $300 million budget gap by 2003. The state rushed in with aid, but the damage was done. In November of 1999, the voters of Nassau—with an understandably emphatic turnout—brought a century of Republican legislative control to an end.

For Empire State Republicans, every demographic trend bodes ill for future electoral success. New York is becoming blacker and browner; it is home to fewer and fewer married-with-children families; as downstate gets richer, the children of the socially conservative blue-collar Catholics of Queens and Staten Island ascend into the socially liberal professional classes and tend to become more Democratic. Meanwhile, upstate's voters are becoming more alienated and economically radical—and have thus become more open to a Democratic candidate who seems to care about them, as Hillary Clinton professed to care. Rick Lazio road-tested George Pataki's "everything is fine" campaign strategy for him. The results are not encouraging.

The governor himself may soon discover the limits of this strategy. The Democrats will certainly field a stronger candidate against him next year than they did in 1998—quite possibly Andrew Cuomo, whose gritty style may persuade the neglected white working class to come home to the Democrats one last time, or state comptroller Carl McCall, who is certain to spur turnout in heavily Democratic

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minority neighborhoods. Pataki must be eyeing McCall and Cuomo with the knowledge that in 1998 he managed to win just 52 percent of the vote against a very weak Democratic opponent.

If Pataki decides not to run, Gotham's mayor Rudy Giuliani is the state's only other Republican with enough credibility to mount a decent campaign against a strong Democratic challenger. A Giuliani campaign would in itself be a step toward reforming the party, since it would be toxic to the New York GOP apparatchiks who surround Pataki. The bruising mayor's first act would be to take control of the state party away from them.

But then what? Nobody has played the role of the outside reformer better than Giuliani. Even after seven years in power, he is an upsetter of apple carts, the recognized enemy of entrenched interests and antique dogmas in New York City's public life. But he has done nothing to help build a Republican party in his reforming image. His endorsement of Cuomo ensured that a city-state Republican alliance never materialized. In the city, he has left no presumptive successor, no organization to ensure that his brilliant ideas and extraordinary accomplishments endure beyond his term. Nothing summarizes his failure in this regard more than the fact that the GOP's nominee in this year's mayoral race is likely to be high-living businessman Michael Bloomberg, a newly registered Republican who has hired a host of left-wing Democrats, including former David Dinkins consultant Esther Fuchs, to advise him.

"Giuliani has left no successor to ensure that his extraordinary accomplishments endure."

So where does the party go? Because it has no overarching ideology to unite its half-dozen different factions, holding them together within one organization is like carrying an armload of potatoes without a sack: at every bump or lurch, some get dropped. One by one, crucial components of the Republican coalition are figuring out that they are getting less out of this coalition than they might get from the Democrats. Wealthy downstaters are deciding that, if they're not getting a tax cut anyway, they might as well vote for the party that's fully committed to abortion. Culturally conservative Catholics figure that, if they're not getting any action on moral and social issues, there's no reason not to vote for the candidate their union leadership endorses. Poor upstaters seem to have concluded that, if their hopes for economic growth are to be sacrificed to environmentalism, they might as well vote for the more generous prescription-drug benefit. Instead of something for everyone, the New York Republican party seems to be trying for a third gubernatorial term on a slogan of Nothing for Anyone.

This won't work. "If voters want a liberal, they're going to vote for a real one rather than a Republican who is a cheap imitation of a liberal," observes Thomas Carroll, head of the anti-tax group Change NY.

What might work is a party willing to acknowledge that it is inherently the opposition party, regardless of the offices its members happen to hold. And the first duty of an opposition party is, as Disraeli said, to oppose. For the New York State Republican party, that means discovering a commitment to reform that tackles the state's still-crushing taxes, heavy regulations, and oversize government. It means tirelessly explaining to uncomprehending voters why such reforms really will improve their lives. And it means combining the commitment to economic and political reform with an appeal to those cultural conservatives for whom the state's editorial pages may have little use, but who have historically done for the Republican party the indispensable phone banking, voter driving, envelope stuffing, and door knocking that the unions do for the Democrats.

New York's Republicans have a stark choice. They can continue as the party of parochial interests and narrow agendas desperately grasping after a few crumbs thrown their way. Or they can finally commit to embracing the Republican revolution of the last 20 years—the revolution of smaller government, lower taxes, and more opportunity—that New York State still so desperately needs. ■

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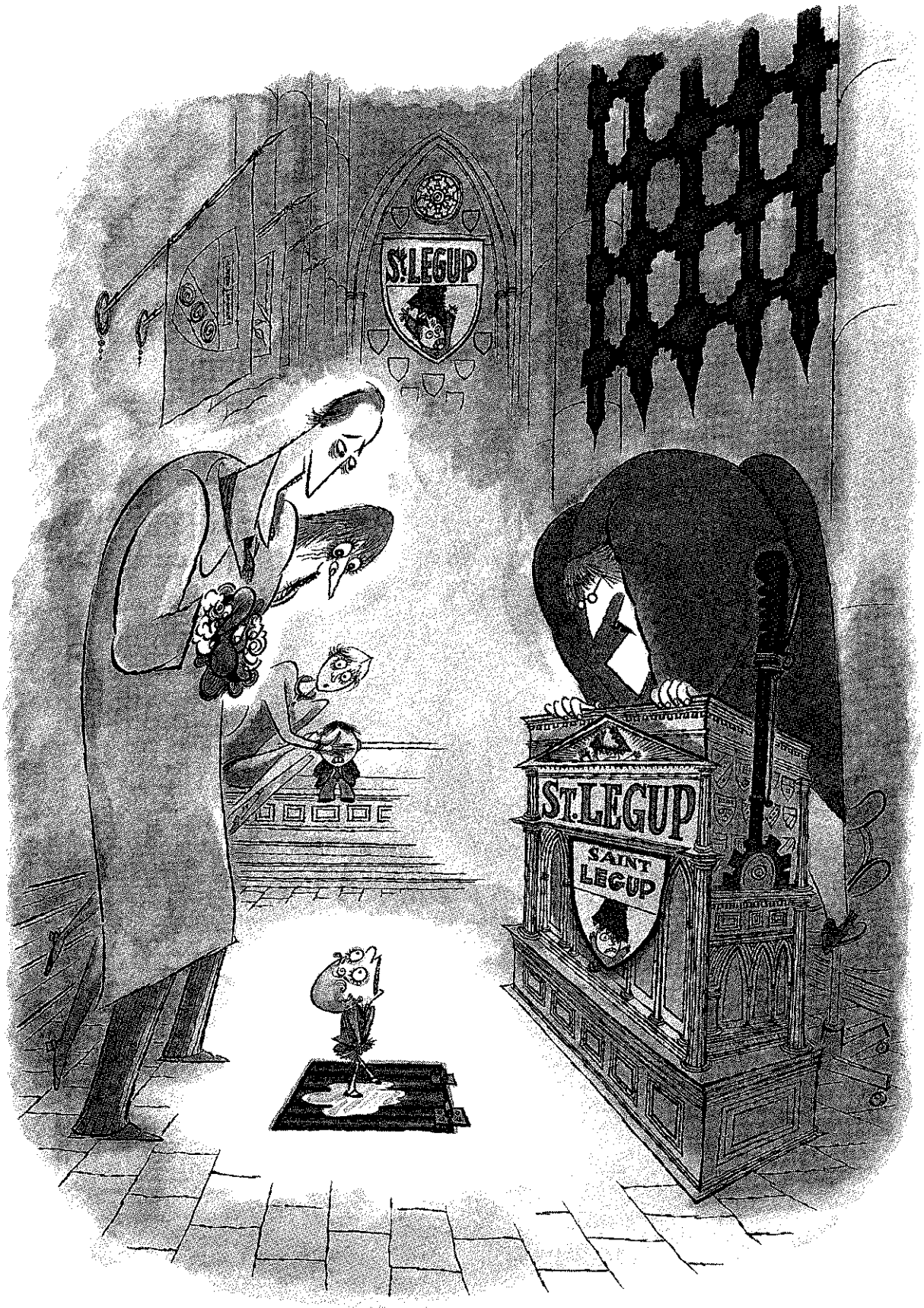

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Survivor: The Manhattan Kindergarten

Two years old already? Time for the young Master of the Universe to start building that resumé for getting into kindergarten.

Kay S. Hymowitz

Mrs. G. recalls it as "the darkest year of my life." She cried all the time. She had trouble speaking in complete sentences. She lost 15 pounds. One of her friends remembers fearing that the stylish blond mother of two, and owner of both an Upper East Side apartment and a Long Island beachfront home, was suicidal.

A child stricken with cancer? The collapse of her husband's business? The death of a beloved parent? Menopause? No, the darkest year of Mrs. G.'s life came the year her son was rejected from kindergarten.

It's hard to imagine writing such a sentence as anything other than a joke, but for members of New York's elite like Mrs. G., kindergarten is an intensely serious business, given the status anxiety that besets even—perhaps especially—the elites, in a dizzyingly meritocratic society. Between a baby boom and an economic boom that have sharpened competition, getting your child into one of the city's select private schools has become a grueling, multi-year competition, with its own rules, code language, and intrigue. It's a mean competition, too—one that can turn sensible, mannerly, child-loving parents and educators into hard, calculating, and paranoid operators. (Almost everyone interviewed for this article insisted that she not be quoted by name and that all identifying characteristics be disguised. "I can't talk about it," one mother of twins announced, banging down the phone.)

That applying to kindergarten should become such a cutthroat business is doubtless an only-in-New-York phenomenon, intertwined with New Yorkers' considerable self-regard. If Mr. and Mrs. Big have made it here, then their children have to make it here too; they must "take their rightful places as leaders in the world tomorrow," as the promotional literature from Chapin, one of the city's toniest girls' schools, puts it. Still, if this Park Avenue version of the game of *Survivor* is something of a cultural oddity, the attitude toward young children that it imposes is not. The pint-size contestants of the jungles of Gotham are merely the most striking example of a profound change in American sentiments about early childhood, as our meritocratic knowledge economy transforms toddlerhood from a mommy-and-me period of fantasy and free play to turbocharged years of resumé-building and networking.

Illustrations by Arnold Roth

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The 70-odd private schools in or near Manhattan are a varied lot, but with few exceptions they share one notable quality: age. They have the mystique of wood-paneled privilege that is hard to manufacture anew and that continues to radiate the glamour that makes even pop divas like Madonna aspire to Scottish castles and English nannies. Many of these schools are housed in fine, old Upper East Side buildings or ivy-covered campuses; students often wear uniforms, including blazers or kilts; they honor traditions like teas and Founder's Days; they may even call teachers "Sir." History has given each of these institutions a unique character. Towne and Allen-Stevenson are small, traditional schools with a neighborhood tone; Little Red Schoolhouse and Trevor Day have a staunchly 1920s left-wing feel; Grace Church, Marymount, and Sacred Heart have proud religious affiliations.

But it is what Victoria Goldman, co-author of *The Manhattan Family Guide to Private Schools*, calls the Baby Ivies that are the million-dollar prize of this *Survivor* game. These are the crème de la crème, the Harvard, Yale, and Princeton of the K–12 set. Decades ago, these schools could easily be divided into two broad categories. The coed, progressive schools—Dalton, Fieldston, Friends Seminary, Horace Mann, Riverdale, and St. Ann's—appealed to New York's artistic and intellectual elite. The unisex traditional schools—Buckley, Collegiate, St. Bernard's, and Trinity (now coed) for boys or Brearley, Chapin, Nightingale-Bamford, and Spence for girls—educated the children of the Protestant establishment, at least until adolescence, when many of the boys went on to board at Groton and Choate. (St. Bernard's and Buckley still only go up to ninth grade.) These days, all the schools pride themselves on a progressive, multicultural curriculum that counts as today's conventional wisdom; you would be just as likely to find a first-grade "interdisciplinary project" on Eskimos at Collegiate as at Dalton and a tenth-grade African-American literature course at Spence as at Fieldston. All of them "respect different learning styles." Yet despite the trendy veneer, the curricula remain fairly rigorous, and the schools still turn out graduates who know the difference between a Van Gogh and a Vermeer, speak French, and play decent tennis.

At one time, getting into these schools, even the Baby Ivies, wasn't hard. Up until the end of the hat-and-white-glove decade of the fifties, your child's school simply reflected the Natural Order of Things. She went to Spence, he went to St. Bernard's—or Dalton or Horace Mann if you were Jewish—in the same way that you belonged to Brick Church or Temple Emanu-El or that tulips bloomed on the central strip of Park Avenue in the spring. But by the sixties, a burgeoning upper middle class of businessmen and professionals, many of them Jewish, began knocking on the doors of the clubby Protestant schools. At the same time, the emerging vision of meritocracy that was leading Ivy League colleges to prize brains over breeding was filtering down to the city's private schools. At least when it came to their children's schooling, it was beginning to seem that the rich could no longer afford to be careless. As of 1968, *The New York Times Guide to New York City Private Schools* was reporting growing anxiety among Manhattan parents: "As a dinner party conversation, [private school] is beginning to replace such subjects as the shortage of apartments and household help." Rumor had it that Brearley was actually turning down the "academically below par" children of wealthy alumnae!

Still, between stagnant birth rates, economic downturns, and a stock-market crash, the competition to get into private school over the next several decades never went too far beyond genteel. The same could not be said of the nineties. Applications to private kindergarten increased by some 25 percent between the beginning and the end of the decade. One mother applying to Friends Seminary two years ago was told that the school had enough applicants to fill up seven kindergartens. In each of the past two years, some 100 nursery schoolers failed to be admitted to *any* tony kindergarten.

To ensure that their children get in somewhere, parents now apply to ten or even 12 schools, some of them in godforsaken Brooklyn. Brooklyn Friends has seen a 35 percent increase in applicants in the past several years, a significant number of them Manhattanites. Poly Prep, in other-side-of-the-tracks Bay Ridge (once best known as the location for the disco movie *Saturday Night Fever*), now boasts 25 percent of its student body from Manhattan, up from 5 percent only ten years ago. And "boasts" is

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the correct word: except for the eccentric and prestigious St. Ann's, Brooklyn schools are the Appalachian cousins of the Baby Ivies and take great pride in the number of their Manhattan applicants; they manage to let prospective parents hear about it on tours and in interviews.

So keen is the kindergarten competition that it has trickled down to the nursery schools. Manhattan parents have always banked on the assumption that getting their three-year-old into a "feeder" nursery that has traditionally sent its children on to the top-tier elementary schools would assure them of one of those coveted spots. Last year, however, for the first time in anyone's memory, some of the city's most elite nursery schools saw families like Mrs. G.'s rejected from all their choices. This has only spread the *Survivor* frenzy to the city's elite nursery schools. Manhattan parents are now applying to six or seven nursery schools. Several years ago, the 92nd Street YMHA, a school whose director, according to the parents' grapevine, has a way with Baby Ivy admissions people, held eight meetings for prospective parents, some of them packed with 50 families. The school had only 25 openings and applications from so many sisters of current students that they told the desperate masses, "If you're a girl, don't apply."

"In each of the past two years, some 100 nursery schoolers failed to be admitted to *any* tony kindergarten."

Just about everyone points to four reasons for this crush of ambitious tots. First, a record number of births nationwide—the "baby boom echo"—has hit densely populated New York especially hard. The city's public schools had the biggest jump in enrollment in 1997–98 of any school system in the country; the Big Apple's comfortable private schools are part of the same trend. Also, more families with school-age children want to stay in New York, because (Reason Two), with lower crime rates and a less in-your-face street life, Gotham has become a more family-friendly town, and (Reason Three) the bustling economy means that more people can afford private school—which is saying a good deal when kindergarten tuitions hover around $14,000. It used to be that families headed to Scarsdale or Chappaqua when their firstborn hit school age, but today private schools are seeing plenty of three- and even four-child families. Finally, like colleges, private schools increasingly want to recruit a diverse student body. Jackie Pelzer, executive director of Early Steps, which guides neophyte minority parents through the application process, reports that last year she placed 125 children, by far the largest number since the organization was founded in 1986.

Add the diversity imperative to the number of children of alumni and siblings of current students, both of whom get preferential treatment in admissions, and what you have left is only a handful of openings. One Upper East Side nursery school director making her routine yearly phone call to discuss her applicant pool was told by the director of admissions at one top school: "We're only looking for diversity. We're not interested in your Caucasian kids."

But though no one likes to talk about it, there is more at work here than increased demand. The Darwinian struggle for a private kindergarten spot is also evidence of the triumph of the cognitive elitism that began in the sixties. The meritocracy has arrived at the playground. As a general rule, the more prestigious the private school, the more aggressively brainy the kids. To get your child into Collegiate or Horace Mann (a school where, legend has it, parents chanted, "Our SAT's are higher than yours!" during a soccer game against Fieldston) is to confirm that he is one of the cognitive elect. "Old-money parents were not out to impress anyone; they just wanted to be with their own kind," explains Ronald Bazarini, author of *Boys: A Schoolmaster's Journal* and a teacher at St. Bernard's for 25 years before retiring five years ago. The new-money parents of today are a different matter. Their children's school reflects their most revered quality, their own intelligence. As a result, according to Barbara Root, director of admissions at Sacred Heart, the school becomes part of a

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"product orientation—measurable success: where you go to college, what kind of job you have."

Making things more loaded for today's parents is that other sources of identity and status have faded in significance. For Manhattan's hereditary ruling class, the private school was only one of many signifiers. For the educated elites who now dominate Manhattan, school, appropriately enough, dominates. "Private schools have replaced the church and country club," says Russell Pennoyer, a St. Bernard's alumnus who has served on its board and is the parent of three private-school children. "It's where you look for your social set." The authors of *The Manhattan Family Guide to Private Schools* quip that "The Headmaster's Circle," a select group of large donors at some schools, is "the 90's equivalent of The Social Register." One mother I interviewed described how her daughter's nursery school director gently suggested that the child would be happier at a "nurturing" (read: less academically high-pressure) school like Hewitt instead of Spence, the high-powered school she had hoped for. I asked another director about Hewitt. "I have plenty of families who would rather die than say their child goes to Hewitt," she sniffed. "It paints 'loser' on your forehead." In short, your child's perceived brain power says a lot about who you are in New York City.

So, just how do admissions directors measure braininess in a *four*-year-old? Through an IQ test, the revised Wechsler Preschool and Primary Scale of Intelligence, required of all children applying to kindergarten in Manhattan private schools. Actually, people never call it an IQ test; they refer to it as the ERB, after the Educational Records Bureau that administers it. One Upper East Side nursery school director speculates that today many schools base 50 percent of their decision on IQ scores. "Now I hear all the time 'He didn't do so well on his mazes [one of the tasks on the ERB].' You never heard that ten years ago. [At that time] I could have said to a director of admissions, 'We have a wonderful child,' and they would take another look. Now they say, 'No. I can see this dumpling is adorable, but his fine motor skills are a little weak.'"

Given the size of the stakes, parents go into full battle mode over the ERBs. They buy workbooks of mazes and shapes; they ask their child's nursery school to practice ERB-type tasks in class, which many of them do. Some families hire tutors, though they never call them that. When I asked one Upper East Side child psychologist if she knew of any children being tutored for the ERB, she said no—before proceeding to describe how she had placed her own child in a program "to develop his fine motor skills." Bellen Nicholson, a private tutor, recalls asking one of her clients if she could give her name as a recommendation. The woman refused: "I think this program is wonderful," she explained, "but this is *my* find. I will not share it." Actually, the unspoken rule is that you *never* allow anyone to know your child is being tutored. People don't schedule play dates for at least an hour after Nicholson leaves their home, to avoid the danger of a nanny-spy barging in on a session, partly because parents want their child to seem effortlessly brilliant, *sprezzatura* for the educated elites.

Aside from the ERBs, the schools also try to weed out the master race from the adorable dumplings by age. To be considered for kindergarten at most schools, a child has to be five by either September 1 or October 1. But the simple truth is, older kids tend to know more than younger kids. Parents figured this out a while ago; they've been holding the applications of their late-summer babies back a year, hoping that the child will have a better shot at impressing an interviewer. Now schools are joining them at this game; several of them have informed nursery school directors that this year they're not looking for young birthdays—meaning June, July, or August. Why? Simple, one nursery school director answers: "They're looking for bigger, better, stronger children."

To be fair, they're looking for bigger and better children because they believe that school is harder than it once was. Maggie Granados, head of admissions at Berkeley Carroll, a small, second-tier Brooklyn school, says that, because of more preschool and parental tutoring, she is seeing so many kindergartners who are strong readers that she is no more impressed than she used to be if a child could tie his shoes. "It's not their parents' kindergarten," Granados cautions.

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The result is an admissions process that is not for the tender-hearted. Take this statement from one nursery school director: "I have one family this year with a son at a well-known coed school. They want a very competitive girls' school; they've limited themselves to the Ivy League. But the child is totally ordinary. She clung to her mother during one interview. [The Baby-Ivy-bound four-year-old is far too self-confident to demonstrate any separation anxiety or shyness.] Her ERBs are ordinary. She's not particularly verbal in class; she has no insightful comments after we read to her. . . . She's a darling, ordinary child who needs to go to Amherst, not Harvard. The father has come to see me 98 times. 'I know this person on the board. I've heard you're really good at getting kids into good schools. I expect to be one of those families. You know how supportive I've been.' He gave me a modest check at the auction. This child will get in nowhere."

Of course, private schools, particularly in the early grades, can never be full-blooded meritocracies. For one thing, no one but the most hard-line test-crusader is willing to put *that* much stock in the score that a volatile four-year-old achieves on a 75-minute assessment. And, more practically, private schools depend on parent and alumni money. Annual auctions and fund drives have allowed Dalton to add its top-floor sky-lit art studios with Manhattan views and Chapin to build its new gym, choral room, library/multimedia center, and black-box theater, as well as to renovate its greenhouse (from which it is traditional that each child applicant receives a plant). And a stream of contributions allows all the schools to maintain impressive endowments and substantial scholarship funds.

In addition, a certain polish and *je ne sais quoi* are a must. No small measure of the enormous anxiety among today's prospective kindergarten parents arises out of the recognition that the elite private schools retain a modicum of class snobbery. Depending on the school, applicants must—or can—provide reference letters from someone who supposedly knows the child. Parents scour their social horizon, looking for any dignitary or semi-dignitary, however distant or implausible. One of your firm's partners is on the board at Chapin; a friend of a friend knows Chuck Schumer. (One desperate mother admitted that when she and her husband heard my message on their answering machine asking for an interview, he looked at her and said: "Do you think she can help us get into private school?") School administrators roll their eyes at all of this, and it's clear that there's no longer any one right connection that will seal the deal. But the fact that admissions offices still pay any attention to these letters helps explain the odd combination of old-world manners mixed with knowledge-economy hustling and self-promotion that characterizes this game of *Survivor*.

Consider the social climbing rituals associated with the early stages of the game: applying to nursery school. Even before their children are born, parents join prestige churches and synagogues that, in addition to exuding an old-money aura, are attached to nursery schools with a good record of private school admissions. "New Members" Sundays at places like Brick Church and All Souls Unitarian, both of them with highly regarded nurseries, are jammed with pregnant women and families with small children who have suddenly found religion. At nursery school interviews, wives obsess over what clothes they and their husbands should wear. They elbow their spouses who tell the wrong joke or yawn. And after these exercises in humiliation, they write thank-you notes. One mother of a two-and-a-half-year-old nursery school aspirant read me hers, composed over several hours, then edited and handwritten by her husband, who, the couple decided, has the better cursive (but not the better eye; the husband reduced his wife to sputtering rage when he inadvertently placed his completed letter, written on white Crane's stationery, in a cream-colored Crane's envelope).

Dear [director's name]:

We would like to thank you for a wonderfully informative tour of your school. We loved it! It was wonderful to see children so actively engaged in their play and their projects, specifically [describe specific project to avoid sounding like a form letter]. How lucky the children are to have the [name] School as their first formal educational experience. We would love for our daughter to have such an opportunity. We believe that she would thrive in such an atmosphere of enthusiastic learning and exploration.

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Thank you very much for the opportunity to explore the [name] School.

Sincerely,

[Parents' names]

Does the right nursery school matter enough for all this? One unsuccessful private school parent-applicant thinks so. "My kid had been in day care," she scoffs. "He might as well have been on welfare."

Besides cultivating charm and connections, parents also try to give their toddler-applicants a little knowledge-economy polish through extra-curricular—or, to be more exact, pre-curricular—activities. The aspiring Spence or Collegiate tot doesn't waste much time swinging on monkey bars at the playground. By 15 months, he has a busy schedule of four or five activities. One Upper East Side "feeder" nursery school director read me one applicant's Attachment A (Attachment B was a letter from a high-profile businessman whose child had gone to the school): Jodi's Gym, Hands On (a music course), and various classes at Rhinelander Center, 92nd Street Y, and 74th Street Magic. It also lists (as does almost every other application she has received) the Upper East Side baby fad-*du-jour*, "Language for Tots," a foreign-language program for kids starting at six months.

The truth is, educators subtly encourage this sort of hyper-strategizing. In evaluating applications, a number of preschools secretly give letter grades to families. And it isn't just a father who doesn't show up for an interview or a mother arriving in jeans that leads to a C-minus. "Our admissions are driven by how easily or not we can place a child in kindergarten," admits another East Side nursery school director. "We do let the occasional lowbrow family in. But if the mom's loud and is wearing garish colors, has bleached hair—I don't mean highlighted—I've got to say to myself, 'OK, nice family, terrific kid, but I'm not getting this mother past admissions at Collegiate.'" What's more, there are benefits to the hysteria. "A lot of my colleagues say, 'What can we do to alleviate this? It's out of control,'" the director continues. "But they take a certain glee that people will do just about anything to get their child into their school. The buzz validates that they are great schools." And this is just applying to nursery school!

Of course, the primary schools are equally guilty. Their admissions directors, wanting to burnish their institution's reputation for being a hot school, maneuver to ensure that all the families they accept actually sign contracts, and nursery school heads have been known to suffer their wrath when one of their families turns them down. Meanwhile, no matter how much parents research and prepare, many end up mystified by much of what goes on in the kindergarten *Survivor* game. One mother puzzled over why her son was rejected at the five schools that she applied to last year. She had gotten the letters from influential people, she and her husband had avoided any grave *faux pas* at their interview, and the child had evidently scored well. "He had great ERBs. Listen to the last line: 'A delightful child.' And on top of that, he interviewed well." Then she paused in a way few parents or educators had paused in the scores of interviews I'd had. "I can't believe I'm saying this about a four-year-old."

"A high-powered, meritocratic culture pushes adults to begin building their children's resumés even in preschool."

But then in a world scouting for "bigger, better, stronger children," people seem to be saying—and doing—all sorts of things about four-year-olds that they've never said and done before. The fate of affluent Manhattan toddlers and preschoolers may not rank high up there on the list of childhood tragedies, but it poses its own dangers. A high-powered, meritocratic culture pushes adults to begin building their children's resumés and expanding their networks even in the preschool years. Says Sacred Heart's Barbara Root: "There's

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no trust in letting things happen in their own time." A veteran educator at one of the elite girls' schools is struck with the exhausting pace of life for these young children. "They go to a matinee of *Amahl and the Night Visitors* and then a night performance of *The Nutcracker*, a week of vacation skiing in Colorado and the second week on a beach somewhere, play dates every free afternoon and sleepovers every weekend." Third-graders, she continues, have taken to carrying Filofax planners. First- and second-graders complain of what are clearly stress-related headaches and stomachaches. "'I'm flustered,' 'I'm hurried,' 'I'm stressed,' they say."

Nor is "parenting as product development," as William Doherty, a University of Minnesota sociologist calls it, unique to New York City. All over the midwest, Doherty says, parents hold their children back from first grade in order to make them stronger when it's time to be on the high school hockey team. In one Minnesota town, until some parents balked, a team of four-year-olds held a weekly hockey practice the only time that the rink was available—at 5 AM. Nationwide the peer pressure on parents is intense. What parents wouldn't begin to doubt themselves when they hear that their three-year-old neighbor can count to 20 in three languages or that their four-year-old niece can surf the Internet, when their child spends his days finger painting and playing Darth Vader, and counts going to the zoo as his greatest adventure?

"What parents wouldn't doubt themselves when they hear that their three-year-old neighbor can count to 20 in three languages?"

The bigger danger is that, as parents put so much of their energy into branding their child-products, achievement threatens to become the only means by which they know and judge their children. As a result, to the most ambitious parents, bright kids don't seem bright enough anymore. When parents receive less-than-dazzling ERB scores, the doubt begins to gnaw. "They have a child who is bright and funny, and suddenly they're wondering, 'Should we get tutoring?' " says one nursery school director. Tutor Bellen Nicholson recalls one mother who called her after a disappointing but hardly disastrous ERB score, crying: "Is something wrong with my child?"

High-scoring children face a different sort of problem. Parents who believe that their child is "brilliant"—and teachers nationwide will tell you that there are many of them who've never even been near an IQ test—often seem to conclude that they should be immune from ordinary social expectations. "If he can't pass the juice or look you in the eye, they say, 'Oh, he's bored,' " according to one experienced nursery school teacher. Why should one of the elect be bothered about table manners, if cognitive ability, without virtue or civility, is the alpha and omega of human excellence?

Still, there are resisters. "I think it's nagging on people that we live in a mad, mad world. These kids are rushing into a New York power life," says one mother of four-year-old twins, who, amazingly, don't even go to nursery school. "But why is it so important to be somewhere at 8:30 when you're three?" Another disgusted mother told the one private school where her son was wait-listed to just forget it—and put him into public school. "At first I thought, 'I'm a bad mother,' " she reports. " 'I'm not giving him all the advantages I can. He's going to be pulling garment racks down Seventh Avenue.' That's crazy. He's in *kindergarten*."

What such resisters seem to grasp is that, especially in today's economy, there are many kinds of stories imaginable. A child goes to public school, discovers his talent at SUNY Purchase, and starts a successful consulting business. His rich cousin goes to Buckley and lands at Harvard Law before joining Cravath Swain, where he drowns his misery in Stolichnaya. Another child does well at Hewitt, graduates magna from Yale, but, wanting time for her children, takes a part-time job as a photographer at a small-town newspaper.

That's the thing about the wild ride of the American biography. It can be hard to guess the end from the beginning. ■

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Building the Opportunity City

Gotham now has a once-in-a-lifetime chance to expand its economy with hundreds of thousands of permanent new jobs. It's up to the next mayor to seize it—or fumble it.

Steven Malanga

Everybody knows that New York City's economy has boomed during the Giuliani administration, but just how spectacularly it has grown comes as a shock when you look at the details. Private-sector employment rocketed upward by more than 430,000 jobs over nearly eight years—the longest expansion ever. During the last couple of years, the city's job-growth rate has even zoomed past the nation's, adding 280,000 new jobs to the rolls just since 1998. Gotham's economy now employs 3.72 million people—more than ever before, except for a brief moment at the end of the 1960s. The percentage of New Yorkers who are employed is at an all-time high, as well.

What no one has quite grasped about this unprecedented expansion is that it presents New York with an historic opportunity to make an economic quantum leap. On the basis of economic realities that now exist as tender but vigorous young shoots, the city could readily create a dynamic new twenty-first-century economy with significantly more jobs—hundreds of thousands more jobs, offering opportunity at all levels—than the city has ever seen, not just in the central business districts but also throughout the five boroughs.

The current expansion has changed several key fundamentals. First, though Wall Street's strong performance loomed large in the boom, the city's economy has become more diverse than it was back in the 1980s, when Wall Street alone mattered. In particular, Gotham now boasts a new, cutting-edge high-tech industry with very strong growth prospects. Second, people from all over the nation and the world are eager to do business in New York, to work and live here, and to visit as tourists. Third, neighborhoods are reviving, offering huge potential for economic development. It is as if the vibrant, striving outer-borough communities of 50 years ago are starting to come back to life.

But to seize this glittering opportunity, the city needs to sweep away numerous impediments that for decades have ensured that every major expansion has collapsed into a steep recession that wiped out all previous gains and returned the city to Square One, so that no secular growth ever occurs. The fact that Gotham remains the nation's most heavily taxed, heavily regulated city, with a chronic shortage of office and residential space, could easily prevent the new economy from achieving lift-off. Whether New York will accomplish the bright future that's

Graphs by Alberto Mena

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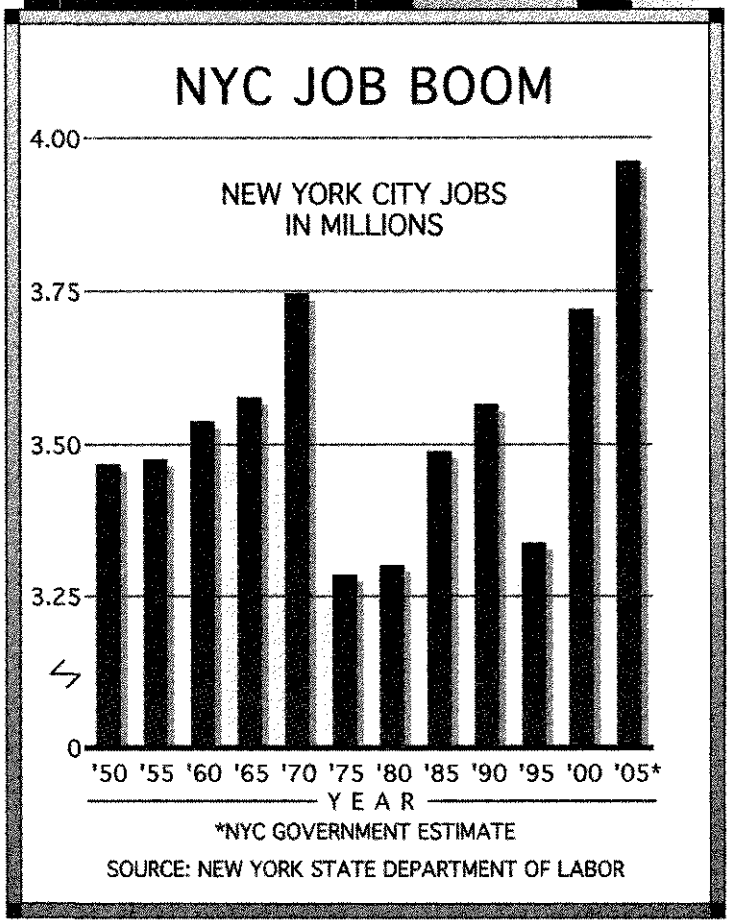
within its grasp will be up to the next mayor, now that the Giuliani administration is winding down. Voters and editorial boards need to be clear about what's at stake as the city chooses the man who will either take advantage of, or blow, this once-in-a-lifetime chance.



Basking in today's prosperity, it's easy to forget how bad things were when Giuliani took office in 1994. After the devastating 1989–92 recession wiped out 325,000 private-sector jobs—fully a tenth of New York's workforce—the city's optimism died. By 1993, a group of economists was predicting that New York could hope to regain only a paltry one-third of the jobs it had lost unless the government intervened with a massive jobs program. After all, experts reasoned, during the expansion of the 1980s, only Wall Street had thrived, while other key sectors of the metropolitan economy drooped. New York's vast entertainment industry, for example, shrank: half of Broadway's houses went dark; tens of thousands of movie and television jobs left town. Neighborhood retail development remained grounded when it should have soared. Why? The city's rising crime rates, which hit 35-year highs by the late 1980s, kept scared shoppers and theatergoers home.

So, when the market crashed on October 19, 1987, there wasn't much around to cushion the city's economy. And the financial sector fell hard. Investment firms, bloated after a decade of growth, axed 17 percent of the industry's total city employment over the next five years. Like tumbling dominoes, the huge business-services sector—personnel agencies, data-processing firms, public-relations companies, and other enterprises that relied heavily on Wall Street spending—contracted nearly 20 percent, costing the city 40,000 jobs. New office towers went begging for tenants. The construction industry lost a quarter of its employment.

New York's city and state governments, predictably, made things worse. In 1990, with Wall

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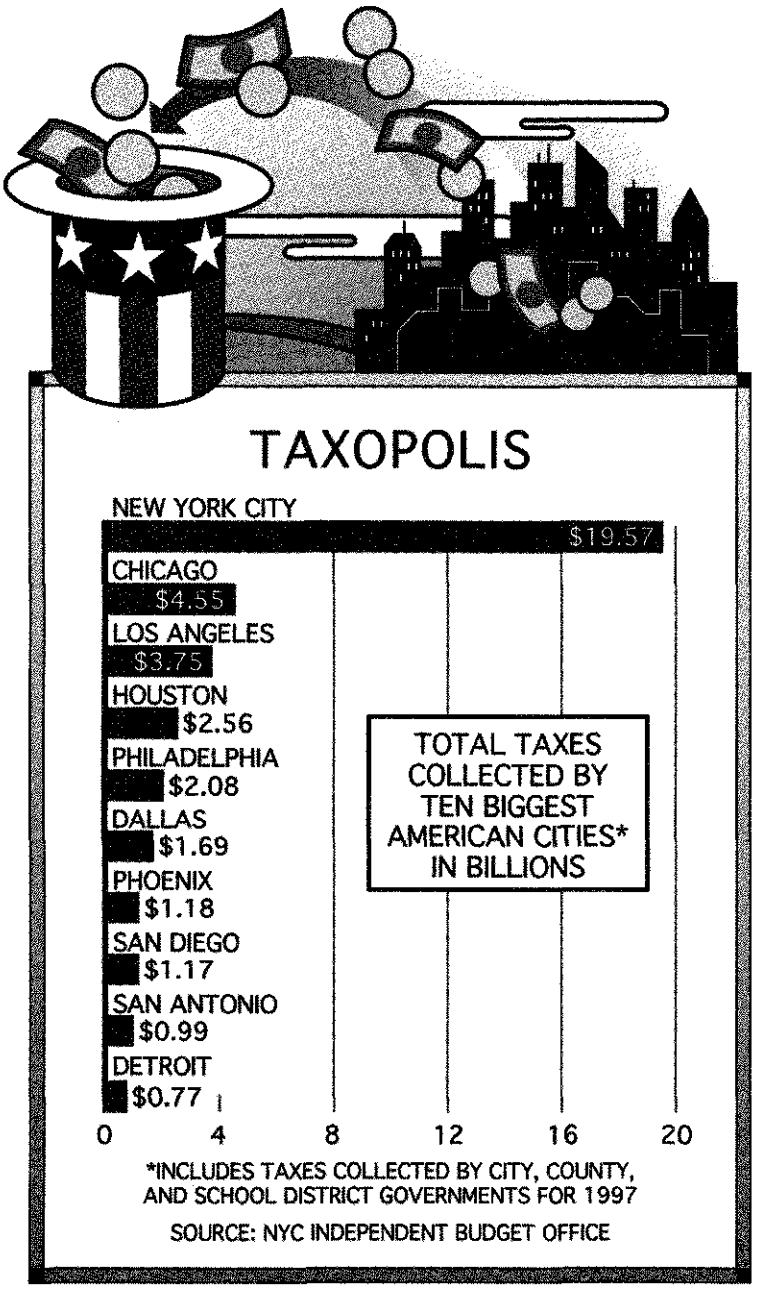

Street's decline causing shortfalls in tax collections, the Dinkins administration enacted the highest single-year tax hike in city history, adding $800 million in new taxes, surcharges, and fees on top of the enormous $15 billion a year the city was already levying. Albany piled on $1 billion in new state taxes in 1991. The increased cost of doing business in New York led many firms—already crippled by taxes and plagued by crime and squalor—to leave the city in search of more business-friendly locales. Others went bust; from 1989 to 1992 business failures in the city soared tenfold, to more than 4,000. In 1991 alone, the year most of the new taxes went into effect, New York lost an astonishing 192,000 jobs—20 percent of all the jobs lost *across the entire country* in the brief national recession that year. No American city has ever hemorrhaged so much employment in so short a time. For a dismal encore, Gotham lost another 93,000 jobs in 1992. Only one economic sector didn't feel pain during the recession—government employment, which grew slightly from 1987 through the end of the Dinkins years.

Given this bleak scene just a short while ago, what caused New York's dramatic, and wholly unexpected, economic turnaround in the Giuliani years? What are the ingredients for economic success that the city needs to preserve, nurture, and build upon?

Obviously, the nineties Wall Street boom played a leading role. In the 1990s, investment banks generated 45,000 new jobs in the city—about half of what they produced in the previous decade—and they indirectly were responsible for 90,000 additional positions. But the city has also created hundreds of thousands of jobs that have little to do with Wall Street, making the current expansion very different from earlier financial-sector-based recoveries. Here a key factor—perhaps *the* key factor—in sparking economic growth has been the city's success in bringing its crime problem under control.

Taking office in 1994, Mayor Giuliani was keenly

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aware that government's inability to ensure order and safety had imposed a heavy toll on New York's businesses. One 1989 study found that 83 percent of the city's small businesses had been victimized by serious crime over the previous three years. The shoe retailer U.S. Athletics closed its New York operations after its stores had been held up at gunpoint 15 times and broken into another two dozen times in 1991. The failure to police the city's streets had gotten so bad that restaurateurs on Manhattan's Restaurant Row—46th Street between Eighth and Ninth Avenues—had hired the Guardian Angels vigilante group to combat the rampant drug dealing and prostitution that scared away diners. Crime's biggest impact was on tourism. In a 1992 Zagat survey, crime-wary travelers placed New York dead last among major American cities as a preferred destination. Largely because of crime (though inflated taxes played a role too), occupancy at the city's hotels slipped to just 65 percent by the early 1990s.

The quality-of-life policing and other innovative law-enforcement strategies that Giuliani and top cop William Bratton famously instituted immediately forced crime down 15 percent in 1994 and another 18 percent in 1995. The huge reduction in crime—nearly 60 percent over eight years—has completely reshaped the city's economic fortunes.

Most visibly, national coverage of the city's amazing crime turnaround has brought the tourists roaring back—nearly 40 million of them this year, up 66 percent from 24 million in 1994. Now that New York is the safest big city in the nation, respondents to a 1999 Zagat survey rank it the nation's Number One preferred tourist destination. Times Square, just a few years ago the embodiment of urban disorder, is a perfect symbol for the tourism turnaround. With crime down 57 percent in the area, it now pulses with out-of-towners. Employment has shot up 25 percent, and the commercial vacancy rate has fallen from nearly 15 percent in 1994 to about 2 percent today, setting off a burst of construction activity that is creating thousands of jobs. The citywide flood of tourists has added 30,000 new jobs to New York's entertainment industry since 1994 and has boosted employment in the city's hotels by a third since the early 1990s. Last year, tourists spent $16.4 billion in the city, 40 percent more than they did in 1995.

Outside Manhattan's main business districts, the war on crime has had an equal or perhaps even greater impact—a facet of New York's economic boom that has gone relatively unnoticed. "The foundation of the city's economic revival has been the restoration of a sense of order in neighborhoods," says Kenneth Adams, president of the Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce. "When neighborhoods are safe, that encourages entrepreneurs to take risks they wouldn't otherwise take." From mid-1998 to mid-2000, the city's four outer boroughs contributed about 45 percent of all new job growth in the city.

"From mid-1998 to mid-2000, the city's four outer boroughs contributed about 45 percent of all new job growth in the city."

Downtown Brooklyn is a prime case in point. Back in the late eighties, high crime rates had mugged the area's reputation. As the recession set in, major development had ground to a halt. Today, with crime in the neighborhood down 55 percent since 1994, downtown Brooklyn buzzes with economic life. New development, especially street-level retail, is going on everywhere you look. The borough's major builder, Forest City Ratner, has opened or has put under construction about 700,000 square feet of retail space in the area since 1998. National chains like Target have newly set up shop. In 1997, the Renaissance Plaza Marriott became the first new hotel to open in Brooklyn in decades.

Smaller revivals are also under way, little noticed but significant, not least because they provide a launching pad for further economic growth. Take Crow Hill, a tiny neighborhood attached to Crown Heights in Brooklyn. Drug dealers had hijacked the area's retail strip, Franklin Avenue, in the early nineties. Storefronts sat vacant and boarded up; local residents lacked basic amenities.

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But as crime fell in the middle of the decade, small retailers trickled back. A local development group began a retail beautification program, and the Transit Authority helped out by renovating the Franklin Avenue subway shuttle. Crow Hill's storefront vacancies have declined 50 percent over the last two years.

The legions of immigrants who have poured into the city, now that the Big Apple is no longer shunned as the murder capital of the world, have revitalized many once-run-down outer-borough neighborhoods and have swelled the city's population for the first time in decades, boosting it by nearly 10 percent to more than 8 million. Russian-born New Yorkers have tripled over the past ten years to 229,000, and immigrants from Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan have more than doubled to 146,000. About 40 percent of the city's population is now foreign-born, up from 28 percent at the beginning of the nineties.

Queens has benefited most from the energy of these ambitious new New Yorkers. An influx of Bengalis, to take one example, has revitalized formerly crime-ridden parts of Long Island City and Astoria. Restaurant owner Shanin Chowdhury, a board member of the 30th Avenue Merchants Association, estimates that Bengalis now own roughly 150 businesses in the area, which has seen its crime rate cut in half since 1994. "When I opened my restaurant eight years ago, crime was our biggest problem," Chowdhury says. "I had a number of my employees mugged, and every Bengali-owned store I knew had been robbed. Now the difference is night and day." The area's biggest problem these days, he adds, is too much prosperity. The retail strip along 30th Avenue has virtually no vacancies, and rents have been edging upward by 5 percent to 10 percent a year, as new ethnic stores—Indian restaurants, Pakistani grocery stores and clothing shops—open their doors and flourish side-by-side with the area's older Greek and Italian food shops, drawing in crowds that make the street bustle with life and color.

Such changes have given many outer-borough neighborhoods a wonderful new vibrancy. On Steinway Street in Astoria, national chains like Benetton, the Gap, and Victoria's Secret sit side-by-side with Greek bakeries and Egyptian restaurants. Nearby on Northern Boulevard, big retailers like Old Navy have opened and teem with shoppers. In Brooklyn, national chains new to the borough, including Home Depot and Target, are anchoring Gateway Center, a huge project set to open soon along the Belt Parkway: it will create 1,500 new jobs. Retail employment throughout the outer boroughs has grown by 15,000 positions since 1995. And perhaps the best news of all: many of these neighborhoods have only started to revive in the last several years, so they have much more room for growth as national retailers discover underserved shopping districts.

Even as formerly blighted neighborhoods have come alive again, New York's main business districts have experienced their own rebirths, led by a striking boom in technology jobs that sprang from the city's indigenous strength as a center of culture and commerce. As the number of home computer users started to grow in the early nineties, New York began to attract software firms looking to tap into the city's arts and entertainment industries to provide content for CD-ROMs. By 1995, companies working on such new media already employed an impressive 27,000 people in Gotham. After CD-ROMs gave way to online technologies, New York became home to early Internet ventures, some drawing on the city's traditional strength as a center of business services. The result has been an even bigger job bonanza for the city, with 58,000 New Media jobs by 1997 and nearly 140,000 by the end of 1999.

In addition, Wall Street's spending on technology—to the tune of about $15 billion a year by the mid-1990s—turned what had been a small industry of specialized local software firms serving the financial sector into an employment powerhouse. This niche industry started the 1990s with fewer than 2,000 firms and 15,000 workers in the city. By the end of last year, it boasted 4,500 firms and 50,000 workers. Technology jobs within the city's big companies have doubled since 1995. Though Wall Street's tech spending is likely to slow as profits slip, lots of the outlays are mandated by external factors like changes in the U.S. tax code, which require firms to improve their computer technology, so at least a solid core of the spending won't evaporate.

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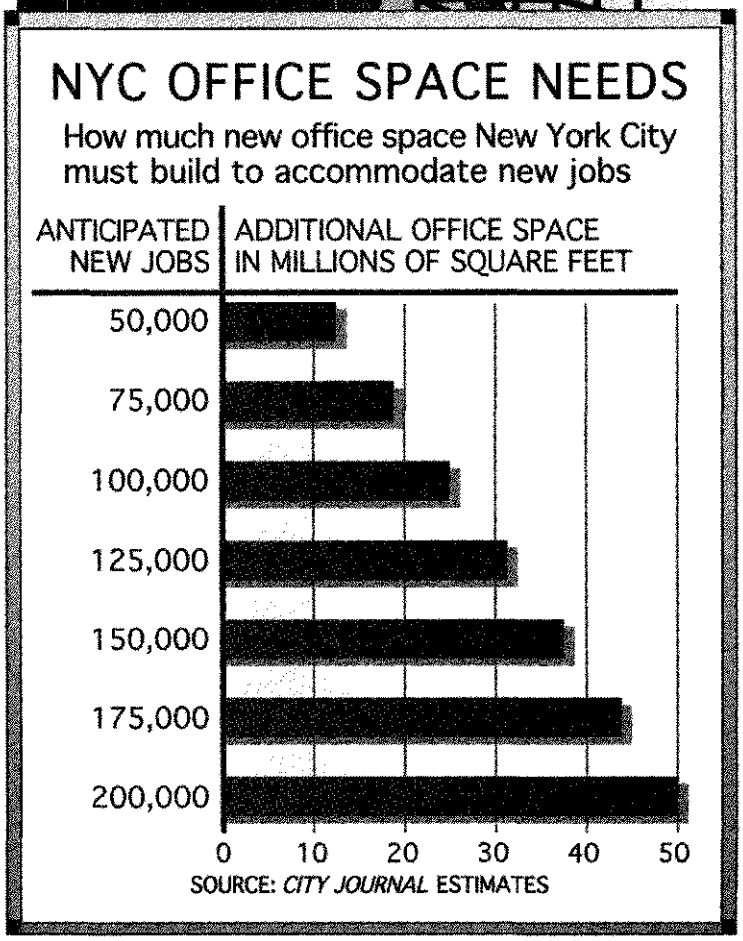
These developments have given New York the welcome—and deserved—reputation of being a big-time New Economy mecca. "When I used to tell people back in the 1980s that we were based in New York, they would ask me why," says Gerald Cohen, chief executive of Information Builders, the city's largest software company. "They didn't recognize New York as a place for tech companies." Now, maintains Cohen, "you *have* to be in New York to be in this business." The city's new reputation as a high-tech center has led West Coast giants like Sun Microsystems, Microsoft, and Cisco Systems to set up significant operations in the city. The current shakeout among Silicon Alley Internet firms is unlikely to change this new reality. "New York now has so many experienced technology workers that, as new technologies emerge, people will form new companies here," Cohen predicts.

The new technology industries have transformed lower Manhattan. By the mid-1990s, many venerable Wall Street firms had migrated to midtown, occupying empty towers built during the tail end of the eighties boom, or filling office space vacated by Fortune 500 firms that left the city during the recession. With one-quarter of the office space in the financial district empty, tech firms, encouraged by tax breaks and falling rents, began moving in. Bankrupt Drexel Burnham's former headquarters at 55 Broad Street soon housed nothing but technology companies. Vacancy rates downtown have shrunk to less than 5 percent, the lowest level since the mid-1980s.



Taken together, all these encouraging trends mean that in a coming national recession, Gotham stands a good chance of getting off lightly and, when growth resumes, of propelling its newly diversified economy into uncharted, higher-employment territory. But here's where wise policymaking will be a make-or-break matter.

The first priority—after making sure with almost religious dedication that crime stays down, no matter

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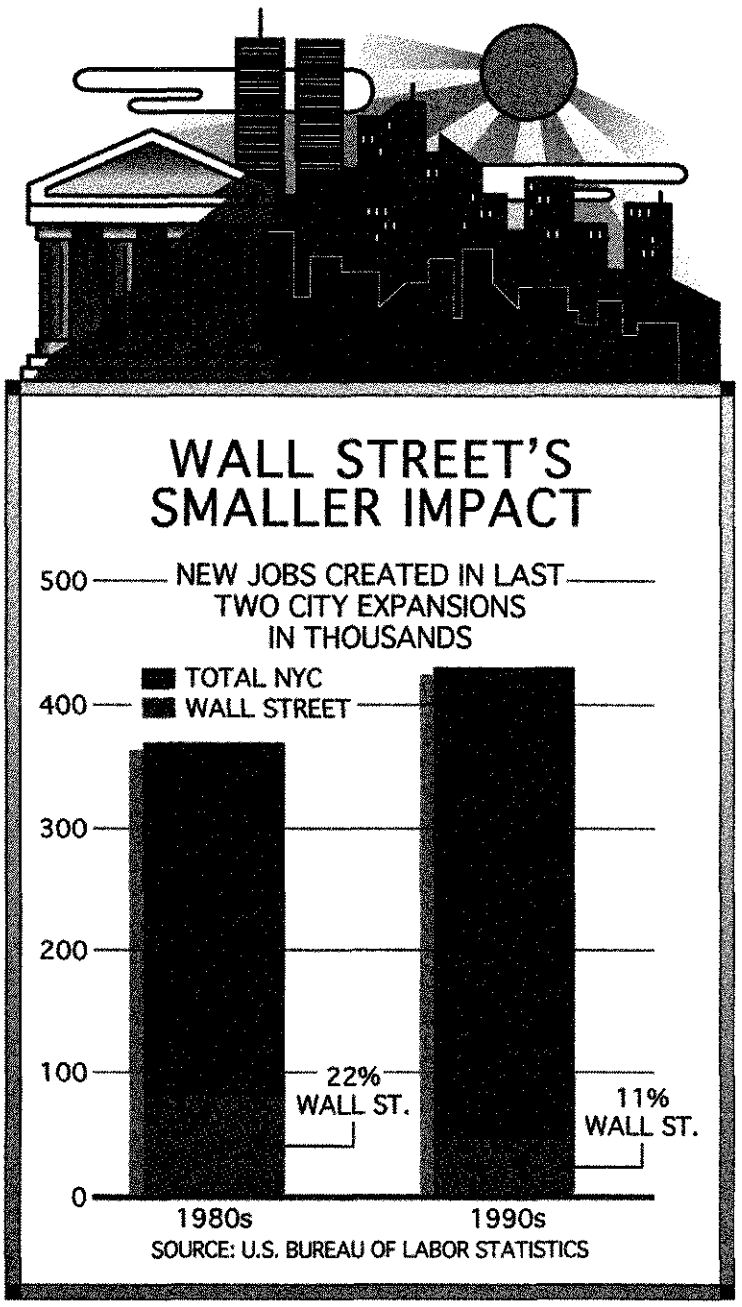

what—will be to cut taxes. When Rudy Giuliani first became mayor in 1994, he understood that excessive taxation had played a key role in driving businesses out of town, reducing the number of New York's Fortune 500 corporate headquarters from 140 in the mid-1950s to 33 today, squelching small-business formation, and causing the city to have 1 million fewer jobs than it would have had if its tax burden were no heavier than the average northeastern city's, as *City Journal* has shown (Autumn 1997). Accordingly, he declared that the economy could bear no new taxes, even though the city was facing a $2.3 billion budget deficit. Instead, he proposed to shrink government spending for the first time in 16 years, to reduce the city's workforce, and to whittle down two irritating taxes: the hotel levy—at the time, the highest hotel tax in the world—and the commercial-occupancy tax. Even though these tax cuts amounted to just $35 million in their first year, they succeeded, as intended, in inspiring confidence in the business community.

But though Giuliani set New York on a new course with his early tax reductions, he didn't follow it very far, and the city still labors under the most oppressive tax burden of any major U.S. metropolis. Even Giuliani's more recent tax cuts, once fully implemented, will only ease the city's burden by about 65 cents per $100 of taxable income, leaving New York far more taxed than other cities. According to the New York City Independent Budget Office, in 1997, the last year for which complete data are available, New York collected $7.99 for every $100 of taxable personal and business income combined. Compare that with Los Angeles's $4.21 per $100 and an average of $4.46 per $100 in the ten largest cities. Only Philadelphia, the sole other major U.S. city with both a personal income tax and a sales tax, comes close to Gotham, collecting $6.82 for every $100 of taxable income—and Philadelphia lost employment for ten consecutive years, from 1987 through 1997.

These stark differences don't worry some Big Apple mayoral candidates, who are already arguing

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not whether to raise taxes, but how. If high taxes really hurt the city, they demand, why would Gotham's economy have rebounded so strongly in the last few years? The answer to that question is simple. The current revival began after a steep recession had driven the city's other costs way down, temporarily making it more competitive with other cities, despite its steep taxes. Now, all costs have risen sharply as the boom has increased demand, and the high tax rates make the city unaffordable for some businesses. In 1994, to take the most dramatic and important example, midtown office space was renting for $40 a square foot, a bargain, despite the 15 percent real-estate tax contained in that number. Today, that same space costs twice as much—a huge amount—and the $12 of real-estate tax that is contained in that price is the final straw that drives some companies out of town. It's in this way that New York's high taxes keep the city stuck in the boom-and-bust cycle whose result is that, despite the latest gains, New York still has fewer jobs today than it did in 1969, while the U.S. workforce has nearly doubled since then.

"New York still has fewer jobs today than in 1969, while the U.S. workforce has nearly doubled."

A new mayor would have no trouble finding legions of anti-competitive taxes worth cutting or eliminating entirely. Topping the list would be the city's personal income tax—the Number One drag on Gotham's economy, since it affects every wealth-creating household in the city. Major cities like Los Angeles, Houston, and Chicago don't have income taxes, and New York's are by far the highest of those cities that do—$1.68 out of every $100 its citizens earn, adding up to an average of $1,364 per taxpayer. The next mayor's top economic priority should be, first, to finish eliminating the two surcharges that the Dinkins administration slapped on the personal income tax and then to go after the heart of the personal income tax itself.

Next, a new administration should tackle the city's absurdly high business taxes. Gotham's government takes $1.31 in business taxes for every $100 of taxable income New York produces, compared with just 19 cents per $100 in the next nine biggest cities *combined*. The city collects $3.3 billion in business taxes a year, and the next-largest city, Los Angeles, collects less than $300 million. Another target: the commercial-occupancy tax, the only tax on rent in the country. Early in his tenure, Mayor Giuliani began phasing it out, but he has delayed the process so many times that midsize and big companies in Manhattan's main business districts are still paying it. The final phase-out won't happen until 2004, well after Giuliani leaves office, so it will be up to the next mayor to finish the job. Eliminating this tax would cost the city $400 million or so in revenue, but it would help contain the swiftly rising and business-dampening cost of Manhattan office rents. Reductions in the city's three separate corporate income taxes would make the city more business-friendly, too, as would a cut in the city's inflated utility tax and tax credits for partners in subchapter S corporations, whose profits (in New York but not the rest of the nation) are now subject to double taxation.

How can the city pay for this kind of aggressive tax slashing? First, tax cuts will boost economic activity and so will partially (and perhaps even wholly) pay for themselves. But it will also be crucial to rein in city spending. Mayor Giuliani started out with a bang in this department when, in 1995, he demanded $700 million in productivity gains from city workers and proposed a $1.1 billion spending cut, the largest single-year reduction since La Guardia was mayor. But then his enthusiasm for further cuts waned—particularly as he sought union support for his reelection.

To curb city spending further, the next mayor should first push for a state takeover of Medicaid payments. In all states other than New York and Arizona, the feds pay half the Medicaid bill and the state pays the other half. In New York, though, municipalities pay 50 percent of the non-federal share, which causes Gotham to hemorrhage $3 billion

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a year. This arrangement entices state legislators to keep loading on expensive new Medicaid services, since they've only got to pick up a quarter of the cost. One of the Pataki administration's biggest failures has been its reluctance to use the recent huge state budget surpluses to revive a takeover plan that died a decade ago. The city might resurrect the Medicaid debate by proposing at the very least to freeze the city's contributions at current levels and then have the state pay for all new expenditures, a proposal first voiced in 1994. Had it taken effect then, Gotham would now be saving $600 million a year.

Paying for the tax cuts will require boosting the productivity of city workers too. Upcoming union contracts are an obvious place to start. Bargaining probably will go on until after Mayor Giuliani leaves office, so it will fall to the next mayor to push union bosses to accept efficient labor practices standard in the private sector but anathema to city unions. The Citizens Budget Commission estimates that the city could save $1.4 billion by such everyday practices as giving bigger raises to the categories of workers hardest to hire, instead giving the same percentage hike to all unions. When New York negotiates a contract with the sanitation workers' union, for example, it should recall that the department is deluged with 75 qualified applicants for every job, and jobs at the fire and correction departments also are already cushy enough to draw flocks of applicants. The city can end some burdensome union work rules by offering to share any productivity gains with workers as bonuses. In addition, city hall should keep pushing hard for merit pay, rather than rewarding productive and unproductive employees alike. It should also work to cut staffing and overtime to reasonable levels throughout city agencies, and it should eliminate or merge scores of useless agencies, such as the Consumer Affairs department or the Public Advocate's office, both of which replicate tasks done by other city or state bodies.

To foster real and lasting job growth, the next mayor will need to figure out where to house future new companies and their workers. The current boom has added precious little office space to the city—only about 2 percent more in midtown over the past six years. There is little affordable space to nurture new industries like biotech, and even companies willing to pay Manhattan prices can't find space. Where will developers put up the needed new buildings, and how will the city provide those buildings with the transportation links they need in order to function?

The biggest development opportunity clearly lies in Manhattan, from 28th Street to 42nd Street, west of Ninth Avenue. This could become the third major business district in a city that for so many years has had only two. Currently a hodgepodge of warehouses, auto-repair shops, and other small businesses, the area, even under current zoning rules, could accommodate 32.5 million additional square feet of development; rezoning could boost that number to 65 million feet, a mix of office towers, hotels, and stores. The city should commit to a rezoning plan that allows for at least 15 million square feet of new office space in the neighborhood—the equivalent of 15 big office towers that could house 60,000 new jobs. Anything less will not produce the critical mass the Far West Side needs to emerge as a world-class business center.

That means that the next administration will have to fend off proposals to devote most of this land to non-business uses like parks or subsidized housing, or that envision using it for a publicly subsidized Olympic stadium, which studies show would be of questionable economic benefit, to say the least. The neighborhood also desperately needs access to mass transit. City Planning Commissioner Joseph Rose estimates that government must spend up to $2 billion to extend the Number 7 subway train from 42nd Street down into this district and to extend the Long Island Railroad to the Far West Side. Unlike stadiums and convention centers, these are the kinds of public investments that ultimately pay off in significant new tax-generating economic activity.

The next mayor needs the imagination to conjure up new office space beyond Manhattan, too—especially at prices that can keep New York competitive with rents in New Jersey and Connecticut. Downtown Brooklyn, for instance, a perfect spot for tenants looking to move out of nearby Wall Street, could become a new mini-city, bustling with wealth-creating activity—except that the area is fast running out of developable office sites. The city could

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begin by rezoning to allow bigger office buildings to be built there, producing up to 15 million square feet of additional developable space. It could move government agencies out of their desirable sites in the neighborhood to make room for office development. Government employees will squawk, of course, as will residents of surrounding neighborhoods, so the next mayor will have to be ready to fight. A positive sign: front-running mayoral hopeful Mark Green has endorsed, with some modifications, a planning-department initiative to rezone the area for more office space.

Meanwhile, as the city has failed to act, major companies have started to plan big new offices on the New Jersey side of the Hudson. Goldman Sachs is building 1.3 million square feet of space on the Jersey riverfront to house 2,200 workers. Chase announced last summer that it is moving 1,900 jobs to Jersey City. Merrill Lynch, which already has about 2,000 workers on the Jersey waterfront, has purchased a site near Goldman's for a big facility. For many relocating companies, lack of New York space at any price is as significant a problem as rising costs.

A new mayor will also have to overcome Gotham's infamous housing shortage and find places for workers to live. The city's rent-control laws, zoning regulations, permit requirements, and taxes make it more difficult and expensive, and often less profitable, to build apartments here than in any other city in the country, so it's no surprise that few are going up. Even in New York's outer boroughs, it costs a lot more to build an apartment building than in any other major American city. Short of eliminating the city's rent-control regime, which in the name of preserving affordable housing actually prevents its construction, the city could rezone to allow residential building along its desolate (but potentially desirable) waterfront and in zones kept fallow in the vain hope that manufacturing will someday return to them. Reforming the byzantine and corrupt permitting process, revising the building code, cutting taxes on building materials and services, and getting the city's building unions to negotiate competitive wage rates for residential construction would also foster new building.

A new administration should continue Giuliani's fight to allow big-box stores to expand their New York operations. The zoning code prohibits big retailers from entering certain sections of the city. But a zoning loophole that allowed the giant retailer Home Depot to open four stores in Queens proves what a boon these stores could be. The chain's first Queens store is now its highest-grossing outlet. True, employment at the borough's small hardware stores has shrunk by some 100 jobs, but the four Home Depots have added around 1,200 jobs, for a net gain of 1,100 positions. This pattern would multiply throughout New York if the city lifted its big-box restrictions and New York regained retail jobs lost to the suburbs. For instance, although total personal income in Queens is higher than in neighboring Nassau County, it is Nassau that has become the shopping mecca, with about 40,000 more retail jobs than Queens. The city ought to try to regain its preeminence in retailing by letting the big boxes in.

"No mayor in living memory has explicitly, convincingly made the case for an expanding, opportunity city."

Most New Yorkers love the vibrancy that the Giuliani boom has brought: the opportunity, the prosperity, the neighborhood renewal, the influx of ambitious young people, the sense of possibility, the excitement of being in a glamorous location where the action is. But no mayor in living memory has explicitly, convincingly made the case for an expanding, opportunity city. No mayor has tirelessly, enthusiastically explained how such measures as tax cuts and zoning changes can transform the city immeasurably for the better. It's a serious political failing; and if the next mayor lacks the understanding or the political will to forge—and sell—a bold economic policy, he'll squander an opportunity that the city hasn't seen for half a century. ■

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Urbanities

A Lost Art

Theodore Dalrymple

Recently, a short stroll between two New York art galleries offered a textbook demonstration of the revolution that transformed aesthetic sensibility in the twentieth century. On view at the Adelson Galleries on East 77th Street were prints and drawings by Mary Cassatt, part of a hitherto-unexhibited cache from her own studio. Two blocks away, hanging at the Salander-O'Reilly Galleries on East 79th Street, were 16 of Joan Miró's "later masterworks" from the Fundacio Pilar I Joan Miró in Majorca. Produced only 80 years after the Cassatt works, the Miró paintings seemed artifacts from an entirely different universe. Seeing the two shows on the same day, I couldn't but wonder whether the upheaval in sensibility really was inevitable. As to whether it was desirable—that is an easier question.

Miró was one of the greatest painters of the twentieth century, a man of the most prodigious talent, so my first thought was that perhaps the descent into chaos and anarchy these late works represent was just a failing of old age. All these paintings date from 1973, when he was 80, or later. But after all, such artists as Michelangelo, Titian, Tintoretto, and Chardin painted brilliantly into old age; and there is no evidence that Miró was anything other than extremely fit and alert when he painted his "late masterworks." The aesthetic impoverishment of these canvases, the degeneration they manifest, was not that of an individual alone but of an artistic epoch.

Miró was born in 1893, 31 years before Mary Cassatt's death in 1924. Though by the time Miró started to paint, blindness had forced Mary Cassatt into retirement, it is nevertheless a mark of the speed and suddenness of the destruction of an immemorial tradition that the lives of these two artists should have overlapped by so many years. While Cassatt's pictures demonstrate an intense, constructive love of the world, Miró's "late masterworks" demonstrate a strangely adolescent, deeply destructive attitude toward it.

Everyone knows Mary Cassatt as an artist of mothers and children: the first book about her, published in 1913, bore the unsurprising subtitle *Un peintre des enfants et des mères*. But it would be quite wrong to conclude from her subject matter that she was a soft-centered, weak sentimentalist. The difference between her and Miró was certainly not a matter of personal moral courage, for such courage Mary Cassatt had in full.

She defied the wishes of her upper-middle-class American parents in becoming a painter at all. To be sure, girls of her class were expected to paint and draw, but as a social accomplishment, not a life's passion; and they were certainly not expected to go off to Paris on their own, as she did, to sit at the feet of the morally dubious master painters of that city. She reminds me of a British contemporary, Mary Kingsley, who nursed her dear father until he died and then went off to the rivers, creeks, and mangrove swamps of West Africa to deal in trade goods and eventually to write a charming, informative, and still-classic account of her tropical activities. No one could accuse such women of unthinking conformity.

Nor was Cassatt a conformist in politics. She was a firm believer in women's suffrage, and the exhibition of her work in New York in 1915 staged by her friend and collector, Louisine Havermeyer, was explicitly planned to raise funds for the suffragette cause.

But Cassatt's attitude toward the past was not that of the vandal (her study of the art of her predecessors was thorough and profound), nor did she see innovation as a virtue in itself. The idea that originality, divorced from any other quality or purpose, might be praiseworthy in itself would have been utterly alien to her. It would have struck her—rightly—as uncivilized.

Her quiet pictures of mothers and children, or of women alone in the privacy of their rooms, are deeply moving. They have that strange elusive quality of a Schubert song or a Vermeer painting, of capturing precisely the bittersweet fleeting moment that makes life, for all its disappointments, travails, and hardships, so worth living. Such moments are melancholy as well as joyful

Mary Cassatt's *The Fitting* (1890–91) evokes Vermeer.

ADELSON GALLERIES (4)

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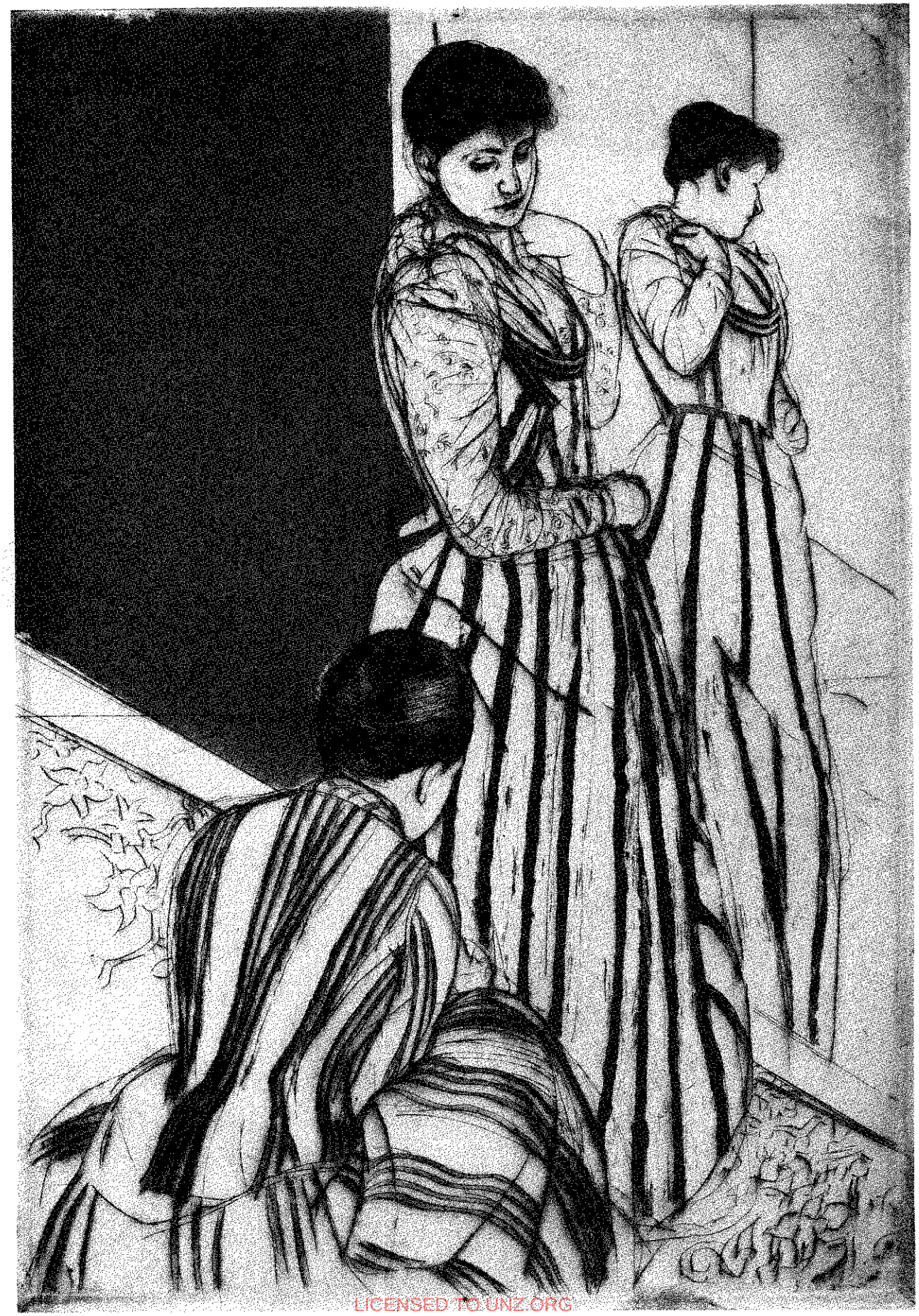

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In *Feeding the Ducks* (ca. 1895), Mary Cassat expresses her unaffected tenderness toward the world.

precisely because they are fleeting: transcendently beautiful but so brief as to be immeasurable. When we look at the milkmaid pouring milk in Vermeer's painting in the Rijksmuseum, we see—as for the first time—how beautiful is a humble stream of milk that pours from a jug, how supremely elegant is its trajectory, how subtle is the play of light upon it; but we understand simultaneously that the moment cannot last, indeed that part of its beauty is its very transience. Though not for long, perfection is indeed of this world. And this perception reconciles us to our existence, full of ugliness as it might otherwise be. If there are Vermeerian moments in our life—as there will be, if only we pay close enough attention—we shall reach serenity, at least intermittently. And that is enough.

Mary Cassatt is the Vermeer of mother and child. She depicts—even better in her prints than in her oils—the precise moment at which a mother's tenderness for her child is most poignant, in an elegant visual language. There is nothing sentimental or prettifying about this: it is perfectly realistic. Mothers, after all, really do love their children tenderly; and with a few very simple lines (the result of much practice, study, and weariness of flesh, one suspects), Cassatt conveys the physical gestures that express the emotional bond. She observed mothers' hands, for example, with a closeness usually reserved for the face, so that in her depiction of them, which is scrupulously accurate, one sees the physical correlate of fathomless love. She does not subscribe to the doctrine that only the ugly is

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truly real, and that all else in life is illusion.

Cassatt innovated, and yet her subject matter was not unprecedented, except perhaps in the degree of her concentration upon it. There is no doubt that she reacted strongly against much that was dreadful in Victorian painting, especially in its depiction of childhood: its falsity and sentimentality, its Little-Nellism, so to speak. Well into her career, painters like Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema or Léon Frédéric were still churning out the most dreadful pictures of childhood. Such artists strained after emotions, not that they felt, but that they felt they ought to feel. This, of course, is one of the sources of sentimentality: it is the tribute that vanity pays to compassion. And thus Alma-Tadema and Frédéric could paint nothing that was truthful either to the world or to themselves.

Cassatt's repudiation of such painters was as much a return to tradition as a break with it. As I looked at her prints in the Adelson, I recalled a painting that I have loved ever since I first saw it over 40 years ago, and that I revisit whenever I can. It was painted more than two centuries before Cassatt's work by Pieter de Hooch, who was second only to Vermeer in his ability to make us see beauty in the ordinary. The painting, *A Woman Peeling Apples for Her Daughter*, hangs in the Wallace Collection in London. A seated woman in a Dutch interior peels an apple for her solemn child, who is standing before her, with intense concentration on what her mother is doing. Neither mother nor daughter is beautiful in the conventional sense: in fact, both are decidedly plain. The beauty is in the moment and in the relationship between mother and daughter, not in the purely physical features of their faces. In this undramatic scene, we see not merely a moment of an era gone by, but the expression of a much deeper, enduring human verity that lies beyond appearance.

Stylistically, Mary Cassatt was strongly influenced by Japanese printmakers, whose work, widely exhibited in Paris in the second half of the nineteenth century, impressed so many painters of the period. The shades of color she used, the tone of flesh, the sharp graphic outlines, the very dimensions of the prints, register her creative response to Japanese art. Some of Cassatt's figures of women on their own—for example, *The Coiffure* or *Woman Bathing*—could almost have been by the eighteenth-century Japanese artist Utamaro Kitagawa.

Curiously, after Mary Cassatt's time, Western and Japanese art went in widely divergent directions. Never again did Western artists—at least, those who wanted to be considered serious—express the kind of straightforward, unaffected tenderness toward the world and human life that is expressed, say, in her drypoint etching, *Feeding the Ducks*, where we see two women in a rowboat solicitously supervising a young child engaged in the solemn delight of throwing bread to a duck. After Mary Cassatt, a disenchantment with the world, real or assumed, seems to have overcome Western artists, so that they would have considered a subject like feeding the ducks inherently sentimentalizing, trivial, and unworthy of their attention. By contrast, the Japanese printmakers—the early-twentieth-century Hasui Kawase and Yoshida Hiroshi, for example—continued unselfconsciously to portray and celebrate the beauty of the world. Only after 1945 did Japanese artists undergo the disenchantment that led them to fear direct portrayals of beauty.

The contrast is instructive. The fact that Japanese artists felt able to continue and develop their tradition of woodblock printing—they were followers of their great forebears, not mere imitators of them—suggests that the change in sensibility that occurred among Western artists and eventually among the Japanese as well wasn't merely an aesthetic matter. It didn't take place because artists ran out of ideas and techniques for depicting the beauty of the world and the grandeur or tenderness of life. The reasons for the transformation lay elsewhere.

This isn't to say that the artists who broke with their immemorial tradition did so all at once, or that, having done so, they created nothing beautiful. Not at all: Miró himself was an artist whose utterly distinctive early work had great beauty of form and color, and whose fecund imagery delights and amuses. In his *Peinture* of June 1933, for example, now in the Kunstmuseum of Bern, the background's brilliant colors shimmer and change as in a tropical

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sunset, while before them takes place an absorbing drama of infinitely suggestive and elegantly drawn forms, one of them insistently female, whose black-booted or stockinged white leg stretches out almost in a goose-step. Miró was never quite figurative (at least, after his artistic adolescence) or quite abstract. His 1935 *Portrait of a Young Girl*, for example, manages to convey, with astonishing economy, all the dizzy frivolity and vanity of youth, with uncensorious affection for it into the bargain.

Nevertheless, talented and brilliant men such as Miró started a downward spiral that ended in artistic anarchy. The Duchamp of the famous urinal was himself a considerable draughtsman; but before long, unsurprisingly, we got the urinals without the draughtsmanship. Miró's talent, his sense of form and color, are still just visible in the "late masterworks" at the Salander-O'Reilly show, but his method of hurling paint at the canvas and letting it drip indicates a loss of faith in the value or purpose of artistic control. From now on, anything would go. He wanted chance to do his work for him. He burned holes in canvas, in the hope that pleasing shapes might emerge; but only a predictable aesthetic and symbolic impoverishment resulted. The logic of an arms race came to rule in art: and legions of untalented hacks who came after Miró devoted themselves to thinking about what had never been done before rather than about what they wanted to express. Miró's later work is an assault on the very possibility of artistic meaning: if chance and destruction are as good as, or better than, direction and control, what sense can there be in sense itself?

This unfolding anarchism in Western art has two sources. First, a new sensibility became dominant among the artistic and intellectual elite after World War I. How was it possible to depict the world lyrically after that great cataclysm? To have done so would have been frivolous and unfeeling: or so it appeared to intellectuals, amongst whom the need to feel things more deeply and earnestly than others is an occupational hazard. (The Japanese, less involved than the Europeans in the First World War, had to wait for the Second World War for the cataclysm that delegitimated their traditional lyricism.)

The social and cultural critic Theodor Adorno eloquently voiced this cast of mind when he proclaimed the final death of art after the Second World War. After Auschwitz, he said, it was no longer possible to produce fine art. The world had become too horrible. "There is nothing innocuous left," he declared. "The little pleasures, expressions of life that seemed exempt from the responsibilities of thought, not only have an element of defiant silliness, of callous refusal to see, but directly serve their diametrical opposite. Even the blossoming of a tree lies the moment its bloom is seen without the shadow of terror; even the innocent 'How lovely!' becomes an excuse for an existence outrageously unlovely, and there is no longer beauty or consolation except in the gaze falling on horror. . . ."

As it happens, there is a kind of sour consolation in thinking that we live in the worst of times, that the horrors we have endured—or at least have heard and read about—are of a nature unprecedented in human history. But is it really true that the two world wars, the terror-famines, the Gulag, and the extermination camps of the twentieth century were of an order so completely different from all other horrors in history that they made traditional artistic endeavor not merely redundant but a positive betrayal of humanity? Should we not remember that Vermeer was born less than halfway through the Thirty Years' War, a war that resulted in the death of a third of the population of Germany, when corpses rotted by the roadside, fields were abandoned, villages destroyed, whole towns put to the sword, and looting was the only form of accumulation? Should we not remember that the treaty that ended this terrible war was signed but a relative handful of miles from where he was living? Does the Thirty Years' War mean that Vermeer was guilty of a callous refusal to see? And did the Great War really mean that henceforth mothers would love their children less than they did in Cassatt's prewar France?

Let us grant, however, that there was something peculiarly

A quintessential Cassatt: *Peasant Mother and Child* (ca. 1894)

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In prints like *The Barefooted Child* (1896–97), Cassatt caught the fleeting moments that redeem life.

dreadful about the cataclysms of the twentieth century. They were appalling in themselves, of course: but an additional source of despair lay in the disjunction between what was technically possible—a decent living for the majority of mankind, for the first time in history—and the uses to which those technical possibilities were actually put. Man had finally freed himself from the burden of religious and other superstitions in order to reach the sunny uplands of rational thought and organization, only to discover the heart of his own darkness, the allegorical truth of the doctrine of original sin.

But does it follow from the special dreadfulness of the events of the twentieth century that the blossoming of a tree can no longer be seen by a decent, sensitive person without the shadow of terror falling upon it? Some of my patients say that they would never hit a woman because they saw their father hit their mother, while others say that they hit women because they saw their father hit their mother. In like fashion, it could just as well be argued that, in the face of catastrophe, the lyrical appreciation of the beauty of life becomes even more important. Sir Ernst Gombrich, the art historian, tells the story of some friends of his in his native Vienna who, after the *Anschluss*, expected to be arrested immediately by the Gestapo. They spent what they thought would be their last hours of freedom together, and possibly their last hours alive, playing late Beethoven quartets.

The idea that, after an event such as the Great War, an artistic

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celebration of the world is no longer possible is nonsense, compounded of strangely twisted romanticism and inverted sentimentality. The artist strikes an Adorno-like pose to establish that he feels the events more deeply than other people, so deeply that the tree in blossom is no longer for him just the tree in blossom, but the hangman's tree in blossom, or the tree soon to be blasted to a charred skeleton of a tree in a nuclear explosion. What counts is depth of feeling. But this is simply a pose: supposing an Adorno-like figure had said, "After the war, sexual pleasure is no longer possible" or "Good cuisine is no longer possible"—the humbug of it all would have stood immediately revealed. Art is precisely the means by which man makes sense of, and transcends, his own limitations and flaws. Without art—or the arts—there is only flux.

Miró's writings and pronouncements are, in fact, a mine of sentimental humbug. It is, perhaps, unfair to stress too much what an artist says—he is, after all, an artist rather than an author or a journalist—and there can be no doubt of Miró's devotion to his artistic calling. But what he said must have had some connection with his practice, and—like so many intellectuals of his era—he was profoundly dishonest in his views.

I take his use of two words—"bourgeois" and "revolutionary"—as symptomatic. There are no prizes for guessing what value he places on each: bourgeois is always a term of abuse, revolutionary almost always a term of approbation. By bourgeois he always meant a fat, complacent, bellicose, porcine quality: a kind of *Der Sturmer* view of the class, with the anti-Semitism removed. By revolutionary, he meant something thrusting, inventive, and tending to ultimate justice and freedom, bringing about peace by the forcible abolition of everything that prevented peace.

To whom, then, did he actually sell his paintings? Again, no prizes for guessing. It turned out that no one appreciated his "slaps in the face of the bourgeois," as he called them, as much as the rich bourgeois himself. As to real revolutions, there is no evidence that Miró ever considered very deeply their effects upon the lives of artists or upon the freedom of artistic endeavor that he so strenuously demanded.

The second great cause of the ultimate dissolution of the artistic tradition is closely allied to the kind of political humbug Miró affected: the romantic cult of the original artist, divorced from his predecessors, "like stout Cortez . . . with eagle eyes . . . Silent, upon a peak in Darien." Since it was progressively more difficult to say anything new within a realist tradition, the tradition had to be abandoned.

Or worse than abandoned. Here are the first words of the director of the Fundacio Pilar I Joan Miró in the catalog of Miró's "late masterworks": "Miró, who from the very beginning understood creation as an act which destroyed everything that came before, brought this attitude to its ultimate conclusion when, aging in body but young in spirit, he attacked his own pictorial universe. He returned to painting naïve paintings and collages, flinging paint on the canvas, which he tore and burned, possessed by a fit of creative destructiveness. This attitude was the consummation of his old desire to 'assassinate painting,' so that, following the same law that governs nature itself, new life, new and vibrant forms could be born out of destruction."

Could one imagine anyone saying that of Mary Cassatt, for all her radicalism? Indeed, could anyone, other than a brute, mean those words sincerely, in any literal sense? Who but a barbarian could fail to believe that a man cannot stand alone if he wishes to create, that tradition is actually the precondition of creation, not its antithesis? The problem with uttering such high-sounding rubbish is that a thousand—no, a million—fools can always be found to believe it.

Miró did indeed say that he wished to "assassinate painting" (whatever that might mean) and to strip it of all representational elements. In 1924, he wrote, "I am moving away from all pictorial conventions (that poison!)." In an interview in *Ahora* in 1931, he said, "The only thing that's clear to me is that I intend to destroy, destroy everything that exists in painting. I have an utter contempt for painting. . . . Painting revolts me." Nearly half a century later, an interviewer from the Parisian magazine *L'Express* said of his art that its "audience

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In his "late masterpieces" (above and right), the aging Miró set out to "assasinate art." He succeeded.

laughs, and sometimes gives the impression of having been hit in the face." Miró replied, "So much the better! You should hit hard. Violence is liberating."

This is no better than, and not much different from, the fascist General Millan Astray's famous outburst in his dispute with Miguel de Unamuno in 1936 at the University of Salamanca: "*Muera la inteligencia! Viva la muerte!*" (Death to intelligence! Long live death!) And so a sensibility that starts out so horrified by modern warfare that it revolts against the lyrical depiction of the external world ends up by endorsing the worldview of the Baader-Meinhof gang, with its abolition of pity, mercy, and ordinary human affection. One is reminded of Lenin, who denied himself the pleasures of listening to Beethoven because it so reconciled him to the world that he wanted afterward to pat children on the head: a terrible weakness in a man who wanted to hit hard, who believed in the liberating powers of violence.

Miró also subscribed to the view—a natural enough corollary of the artist as lone creator—that change was progress. Probably he was dazzled, as many artists were, by the scientific and technological progress of his time. But just as the analogy between the laws of nature and the laws of artistic creation (an analogy drawn in the catalog of the exhibition of his "late masterworks" by the director of his foundation) is false, so the analogy between progress in the sciences and progress in the arts is false. Art, in its highest expression, explains our existence to us, both the particularities of the artist's own time and the universals of all time, or at least of all human history. It transcends transience and therefore reconciles us to the most fundamental condition of our existence. In the history of art, unlike that of science, what comes after is not necessarily better than what came before.

Miró's "late masterworks" lost almost all contact with human existence, not succeeding even as decoration, a failure all the more evident by comparison with the nearby works of Cassatt. In the transition of late Cassatt to late Miró, one sees the slide from the universally human to the merely egotistical. ■

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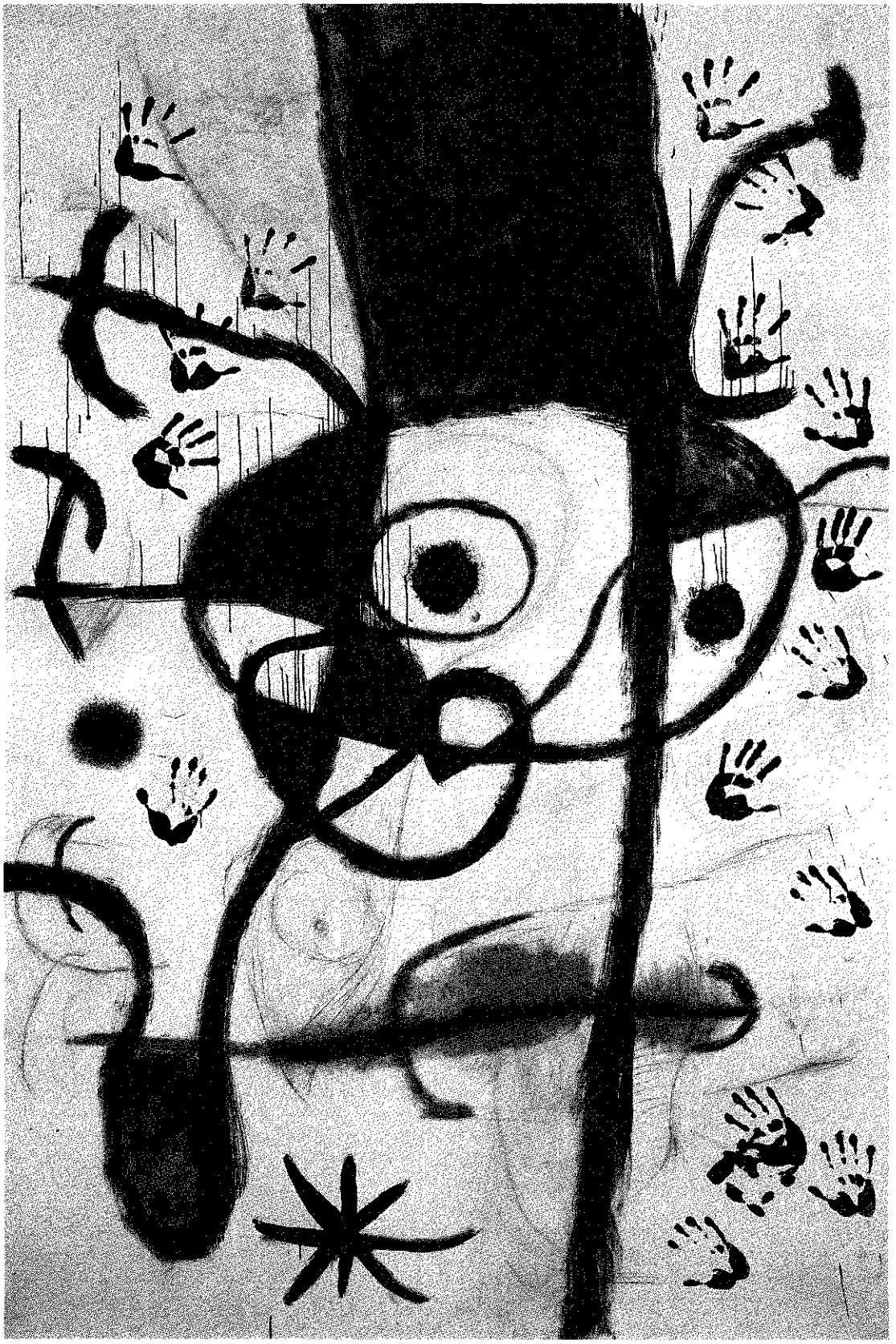

LEFT: STEVE HERNANDEZ; ISABEL/CORBIS RIGHT:©2001 ARTISTS RIGHTS SOCIETY (ARS), NEW YORK / ADAGP, PARIS

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Becoming a Family

Roger Scruton

I grew to immaturity in the sixties, at the moment famously, and ironically, described by Philip Larkin:

Sexual intercourse began
In nineteen sixty-three
(Which was rather late
for me)—
Between the end of the
Chatterley ban
And the Beatles' first LP.

Young people of my generation had no time for Larkin's irony and simply dismissed traditional sexual morality as a clutter of meaningless taboos. The old culture endured among adults, especially those who had fought in the war and learned firsthand that societies depend on sacrifice. But the fidelity of our elders to the old mores merely caused our experiments to appear romantic and sophisticated in our own eyes, marks of a singular freedom of mind.

In truth, I didn't enjoy the spectacle of permissiveness and half suspected that the old morality was right. Nevertheless, I was not going to miss out on the available freedoms and felt entitled to my share of thrills. Like many of my generation, therefore, I was reluctant to marry and did so only when I discovered that my experiment in cohabitation had ceased to be an experiment and had become a commitment instead.

My wife-to-be had been brought up as a Roman Catholic in provincial France. We had lived together through the antics of May 1968, which impressed both of us with the destructiveness and stupidity of people when guided by nothing more than a desire for liberation. Marriage was to bring an end to such childish things and to imbue our life with discipline.

In that spirit, I attended the obligatory lessons with Father Napier of the Brompton Oratory in London, by way of preparing for the sacramental—and sacrificial—act. The Oratory retains the permitted vestiges of the Latin mass and as a result has amplified its congregation of true believers with a reserve army of believers in belief, of which I was one. Next to the Italianate church, where its priests sing in their gorgeous robes, and a four-part choir responds, stands an altogether humbler building, the residence of the Oratorians, whose order requires them not to fast and pray in seclusion but to go out and spread the word, obedient to the vision of Saint Filippo Neri, their activist founder and high priest of the Counter Reformation. Neri made the term "propaganda" part of the language, and the thing denoted by it part of life. But the home of his London followers, established in the last century by the great Cardinal Newman, has a dull, quotidian atmosphere; it is a place of quiet footsteps and mumbled greetings. Copperplate engravings of forgotten saints gather dust in corners, and the smell of institutional cooking wafts down corridors where nothing moves save a shuffling old priest, a fluttering curtain, or an aproned housemaid too old and stiff to brush the high cobwebs away.

JOHN CONSTABLE (1776–1837), *THE BRIDGES FAMILY*, TATE GALLERY, LONDON/ART RESOURCE, NY

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In the room set aside for instruction, Father Napier rehearsed the tenets of the Catholic faith. I assented to them all: not one of them created the slightest intellectual difficulty, save the major premise of God's existence. But this too could be held in place, I surmised, by the structure that had been built upon it, and whose angles and junctures I knew from Saint Thomas Aquinas. A religion without orthodoxy is destined to be swept away by the first breath of doubt. When the doctrines are all in place, however, neatly interlocking, expressed and endorsed by ritual, then, I reasoned, none can be pried free from the edifice and exposed to questioning. The structure stands unshakably, even though built upon nothing. Seen in this way, religion is a work of art, and its values are aesthetic values: beauty, wholeness, symmetry, harmony.

Clearly, my attitude to the Church whose rituals I was prepared to borrow was not ultimately the attitude of a believer. Hence, when the marriage came under strain—which it very soon did, since our years of cohabitation had disenchanted our first love, while offering no second love in place of it—the religious chains proved to be made of paper.

Divorce appeared at the time in all the attractive colors of an easy option: a bid for freedom, a way to become what I truly and authentically was. Young people of my generation were told to seize their chances and to free themselves from guilt. Only too late do you discover that guilt is not a sickness to be overcome but a punishment to be lived through. The years following the end of my first marriage were filled with grief, and rightly so. Nobody should be allowed to get away scot-free from a life's commitment, and no one should treat lightly what is the most solemn vow. You can hope for forgiveness; but you have no right to expect it.

Nevertheless I learned from the experience. My guilt was a clear proof of the Church's view of matrimony as an indissoluble tie. This doctrine, which at the time of my marriage had been for me merely an inert corollary to an abstract system of theology, now hit me in the face as a living truth about the human condition and a deep explanation of the ruined lives that I saw on every side, my own and my ex-wife's included.

For 20 years, my efforts at romance would fizzle out, quenched in the inward flow of lamentation. This process, if painful, was also purifying. It rid me of illusions and in particular of the illusion that sexual love is just an ordinary expression of our freedom. Often I recalled those quiet corridors of the Oratory and the foretaste they had offered of the penitential path beyond my marriage. A doctrine that permitted no other course save abstinence elevated marriage to a higher sphere, idealized it as a kind of redemption. What Father Napier had offered us through marriage was the very thing the Oratorians enjoyed in their place of dusty rituals: the transfiguration of everyday life.

When I met Sophie, six years ago, I knew how ridiculous it was for a man of 50 to propose marriage to a girl of 22. But it was as though I had carried her portrait within me during 20 years of penitence and had suddenly happened upon her incarnation. We were introduced in the hunting field, constrained by the meticulous courtesies of which fox hunting is, in England, one of the few remaining preserves—the real reason our new rulers hate it. If romantic feelings arise in such a context, they come imbued with courtly hesitation. So it was with us, and it is part of what made us serious. Although impatient every Saturday for the moment when Sophie would appear, I was nonplused in her presence, searching in vain for words. Then one day my horse fell, and she stopped to rescue me, so sacrificing the day's pleasure and giving proof that she cared. We began an old-fashioned courtship that lasted through many months of restraint.

Formality does not freeze emotion but heightens it. And emotions that take ritual shape lead of their own accord to that supreme ritual, which is marriage. By amplifying the distance between you, courtship intensifies the magnetic force when finally you join. Indeed, in our tradition—not necessarily the only or the best one, but the only one we have—marriage ought to be seen as the culmination of a process that begins in bashfulness and proceeds by stages to an intimacy both resisted and desired.

I was lucky: not everyone is given a second chance, certainly not a second chance like this one, in which sympathy sparked across the years, made us welcome the

JOHN WOLLASTON (1742–1775), *FAMILY GROUP*, THE NEWARK MUSEUM/ART RESOURCE, NY

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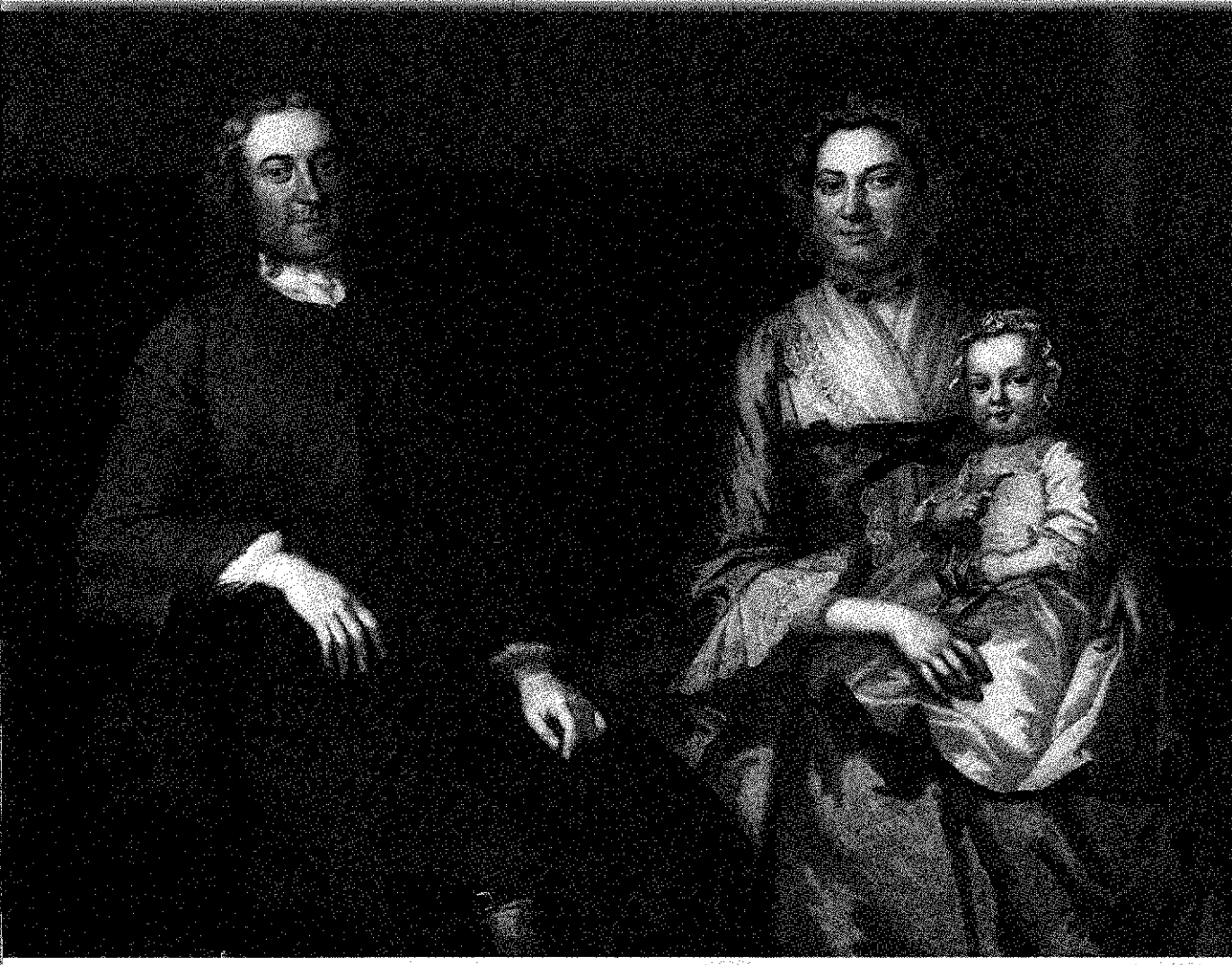

barrier of age and then work to overcome it. When we awoke to what had happened, we knew that it was too late to think of any course but marriage, which had grown between us like a plant that had suddenly burst into flower.

Of course it matters what others think, and we, especially, needed their acceptance. The small-scale, furtive event in the registry office, hastily conducted like an illicit affair, would not have served our need. On the contrary, it would have seemed an admission that our spheres and years divided us and that we were making a dreadful mistake. We needed to make others complicit in our venture, to be bound together not just in private but also in the public eye. Ceremonies are redemptive. They raise private undertakings into public avowals, and at the same time make the union of individuals into an emblem of the community's will to endure.

Modern society tends to construe marriage as a kind of contract. This tendency is familiar to us from the sordid divorces of tycoons and pop stars, and is made explicit in the "prenuptial agreement," under the terms of which an attractive woman sells her body at an inflated price, and a man secures his remaining assets from her future predations. Under such an agreement, marriage becomes a preparation for divorce, a contract between two people for the short-term exploitation of each other.

Surprisingly, it was the great Immanuel Kant who prepared the world for this view of things, describing marriage, in language of exemplary bleakness, as a "contract for the reciprocal use of the sexual organs." But then Kant didn't marry, and his heresy was soon corrected by Hegel, who did. According to Hegel, marriage is a "substantial tie." It begins in a contract—but it is a contract to transcend contract, by abolishing the separation between the parties.

Hegel's point can be put more simply. Marriage is surrounded by moral, legal, and religious prohibitions precisely because it is not a contract but a vow. Contracts have terms and come to an end when the terms are fulfilled or when the parties agree to renounce them. They bind us to the temporal world and have the transience of human appetite. Vows do not have terms,

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nor can they be legitimately broken. They are "forever"; and in making a vow you are placing yourself outside time and change, in a state of spiritual union, which can be translated into actions in the here and now but also lies above and beyond the world of decaying things. That we can make vows is one part of the great miracle of human freedom; and when we cease to make them, we impoverish our lives by stripping them of lasting commitment.

Hence divorce does not end a real marriage, which will continue to bind those who have drifted away from it or who have tried to set its vows aside. For 20 years I was constantly aware of that other person, whom I no longer saw, but whose thoughts, feelings, and reproaches were addressed to me in my own inner voice. Sophie understood this and accepted it, because she is the child of divorced parents, who took trouble never to quarrel in her presence and always to speak of each other with the respect due to a fellow parent. Sophie was the living reminder of their vows and of the need to give due weight to them, and the marriage remained in a strange way untouchable, just because it was sacred in the eyes of a child.

Thanks to that great reservoir of fudge and compromise that is the Anglican Church, divorcés can now wed in church—not through a marriage ceremony but through a "service of dedication," designed to put a holy seal on the state's scrap of paper. Without presuming on, but nevertheless hoping for, forgiveness, you can petition the Almighty through this lesser ceremony and thereby summon the support and endorsement of your community. We married in a registry office and arranged the service of dedication for the next day, in Sophie's local church. We had rehearsed our vows, and discovered as we spoke them that they were exactly what we felt. This promise to love, honor, and cherish till death us do part was precisely a recognition of our new state of unity.

Our feelings gained an added solemnity, now that all those on whose approval we depended were silently observing us. The words seemed to echo back from the unseen wall of sympathy in the church behind, and—far from announcing our bondage—they were a cry of liberation, the real liberation that comes through accepting a moral law. In my first marriage, I had lost my freedom by wanting to hold on to it. In my second, I regained it at the moment when I freely gave it away.

When we first met, I had just acquired the old farm where we now live. It is a truth universally acknowledged that a single man in possession of a house and 30 acres must be in want of a wife. But Sophie was as surprised by what happened as I was and entered my life almost on tiptoe, disturbing nothing and seeming to admire my bachelor ways at the same time as she gently and discreetly abolished them. Under her influence I became more outgoing and more relaxed, while never for a moment fearing that I might lose my carefully acquired routines and my armory of homegrown protections. There resulted from this an unusual division of roles: I do the cooking and the housework; she looks after the animals. We work at our desks in the day and ride out when we can. And whenever one of us crosses the house to peer at the other, it is always with a thrill of anticipation, like a child creeping up on its parent.

Sometimes we embark on a quarrel, but there is neither winner nor loser, because we are one thing, not two, and any attack on the other becomes an attack on oneself. All the matters over which people like us are supposed to argue—money, freedom, visits, friends, hobbies, tastes, habits—become occasions for a deeper cooperation. What we have discovered through marriage is not the first love that induced it but the second love that follows, as the vow weaves life and life together. Western romanticism has fostered the illusion that first love is the truest love, and what need has first love of marriage? But an older and wiser tradition recognizes that the best of love comes after marriage, not before.

The birth of Sam did not change things. But it presented us with a problem that is particularly acute in Britain. The state now forces us to send our children to school, while ensuring that nothing much in the way of education occurs there. What passes for education in many British schools is really a process of demoralization, in which children are taken from their parents and surrendered to their peers. Today, significant numbers of young Britons leave school unable to read or do

ANTONIO DONGHI (1897–1963). *BAPTISM*. ALINARI/ART RESOURCE, NY

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mental arithmetic. Useless old subjects like Latin, Greek, and higher mathematics have disappeared, and English grammar, with its oppressive rules and useless complexities, has been pushed aside as "elitist." As for manners, these have declined to such an extent that shops near London schools regularly close their doors to children, while older people seek refuge in another car when children board a train.

Instead of preparing children for adult life, our system of education ensures that they remain children, with all of childhood's self-centered incompetence but none of its redeeming innocence and shame. The state's attempt to sexualize children—encouraging members of the younger generation to master all the relevant positions by the age of 14, and making homosexuality a central part of their curriculum—doesn't help matters. Sex, pupils learn, is just an extension of childhood—another realm of play, in which all is permitted that could lead to enjoyment, and in which only the serious, the lasting, and the loving are dangerous.

The sixties' ideology, which caused such havoc in my own personal life, and the evil effects of which it took me 20 years to overcome, is now an obligatory basis of schooling, enforced from the tenderest age, and with complete disregard for the personal happiness and long-term hopes of the pupils. What I escaped only with the greatest difficulty and by the skin of my teeth is now being imposed as a general destiny. Surely, the first of my duties toward Sam is to ensure that he does not fall into the clutches of the people who want to do this to him.

The new curriculum, which has both the aim and the effect of cutting off children from their parents, making them unlovable to adults and the exclusive property of the state, springs from the minds of people who are themselves, for the most part, childless. It would be better, it seemed to us, for Sam to be sent down a coal mine, there to encounter the real world of adults, than to go through the complete course in demoralization that our rulers require. Even the private schools must follow the National Curriculum, which has been carefully devised to remove all the knowledge that Sophie and I value and to substitute the "life skills" needed in an urban slum.

The only solution that has occurred to us so far is to educate Sam ourselves for as long as time, energy, and knowledge permit and then to send him to the Lycée Française in London, on the understanding that the French have been slightly less contemptuous toward their national culture than we have been. As to what Sam's curriculum should be, common sense directs us down the old and beaten path. And we shall start him off with Grimm, Andersen, and Lewis Carroll, since their brand of children's literature does not merely enlarge the imagination: it also educates the moral sense.

While pondering this matter, however, I was invited by a national newspaper to describe what we intended for Sam—a sign that many people share our concerns. Naturally, I assured the readers, if John Stuart Mill could read Greek at six, why not Sam? And maybe Sam's first public utterance could match that of the four-year-old Macaulay, deflecting the meddlesome attentions of a toddler-coddler, after he had hurt himself, with the words: "I thank you, Madam, the agony is abated." Sam would be kept away from pop music and television but would study the viola as a salutary form of self-abasement. He would be introduced to horses and fox hunting, so as to learn both to care for animals and to do so unsentimentally. He would be taught the virtues—courage, justice, prudence, and temperance—in their Christian version, as forms of faith, hope, and charity. And although Sam would probably not enjoy his childhood, I wrote, he would emerge from it as someone agreeable to others, whether or not happy in himself.

The article precipitated a storm of abuse from experts in child-rearing, educational gurus, feminists, and assorted believers in progress—all manifestly products of an education system that identifies irony as an elitist crime and has therefore extinguished the ability to understand it. For several weeks, we lived in dread of the social workers. If we could not answer their inquiries, we feared, Sam would be put into foster care, denied all access to his parents, and given a normal diet of pop, television, and takeout.

The experts who greeted our educational plans with such outrage were, after all, the voice of our modern culture—the very same culture that has shaped the

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educational system and set up the state in opposition to the family. It is only since becoming part of a family that I have fully gauged the depth and seriousness of this opposition. The family has become a subversive institution—almost an underground conspiracy—at war with the state and the state-sponsored culture.

Hence the official curriculum has rigorously excluded the family. Mothers appear from time to time in schoolbooks, but they are conspicuously single. Fathers are never mentioned—indeed, they have become unmentionable, as trousers were to our Victorian ancestors. The state-imposed sex education is designed to sever the link between sex and the family, by showing the family to be merely an "option." Sex education will ensure that the next generation will not form families, since it will have destroyed in its pupils everything that leads one sex to idealize the other and so to channel erotic feelings into marriage.

But Sophie and I have no doubt that it is the family, not the state, that fulfills us. Hence we have decided to follow our own instincts and observations, and to bring up our children as we believe to be right. We are members of a growing class of criminals, who have declared war on the state-sponsored culture and are prepared to challenge it.

This official culture is founded on the premise that the human material is infinitely plastic and can be molded by the state into any shape required. This is one of the first of the official doctrines that you learn, as a parent, to doubt. We compared Sam with other boys and could not help remarking how similar they are in one fundamental respect: which is, that they all want to be men. Moreover, they all associate manliness with action, with the use of tools, with the making of something out of nothing, and with power and the machines that produce it. Sam has shown little concern for language, has entirely neglected not only the viola but also the guitar and the piano, and has confined his musical experiments to turning on the rhythm machine of my electronic keyboard whenever he sees me working.

His principal interest is building. He spends his days with the men who are working on our extension—handing out trowels, heaving buckets, mixing his own version of cement and occasionally using it to make plaster casts of living chickens. Although he is unlikely to emulate either Mill or Macaulay, his eager, cooperative nature, his determination to be useful, and his narrow but real curiosity about the world of masculine labor has endeared him to many hearts.

The official doctrine attributes such tendencies to culture: change the toys, the role models, and the contexts, the experts say, and boys will dress up, play with dolls, coddle animals, and make little interiors where they can be snug as a bug in a rug. But there seems to be a paucity of supporting evidence for such a view. Science, common sense, and recorded history all point to the conclusion that sex is a constant, which influences what can be achieved and what can be desired. Rather than work against it, we should work with it, to use its vast and unconscious power to drive our civilizing purpose.

The birth of our baby girl Lucy again awoke our curiosity in this respect, and while we of course intend to bring her up in the same improving regime that we proposed for Sam, we are fairly sure that she will not be seen, 12 months hence, with a trowel in her hand. Lucy's first smile was enough to convince us of this. Whereas Sam grinned broadly and mischievously, and then reached out to tear down the toy horse that hung above his crib, Lucy offered a serene, observing twinkle. Friends and neighbors all confirm the view that little girls are interested in people, in words, in the intimate togetherness of home, and that tools and machines fail to awaken their sympathies.

Why should people resist the obvious, when it comes to sexual roles? The answer, I believe, goes to the heart of our modern anxieties. In the world described by Jane Austen, men and women enjoyed separate spheres of action, the first public, the second private, the first involving influence without intimacy, the second an intimacy that was also a form of far-reaching, though publicly hidden, influence. Dress, manners, education, recreation, and language all reinforced this division, with marriage as the great life-choice in which it culminated and whose purpose it was. Because there is no going back to Jane Austen's world, we take refuge in the belief that every aspect of it reflects some arbitrary cultural imperative, with nothing due to permanent human nature. By extending cultural relativism

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Urbanities

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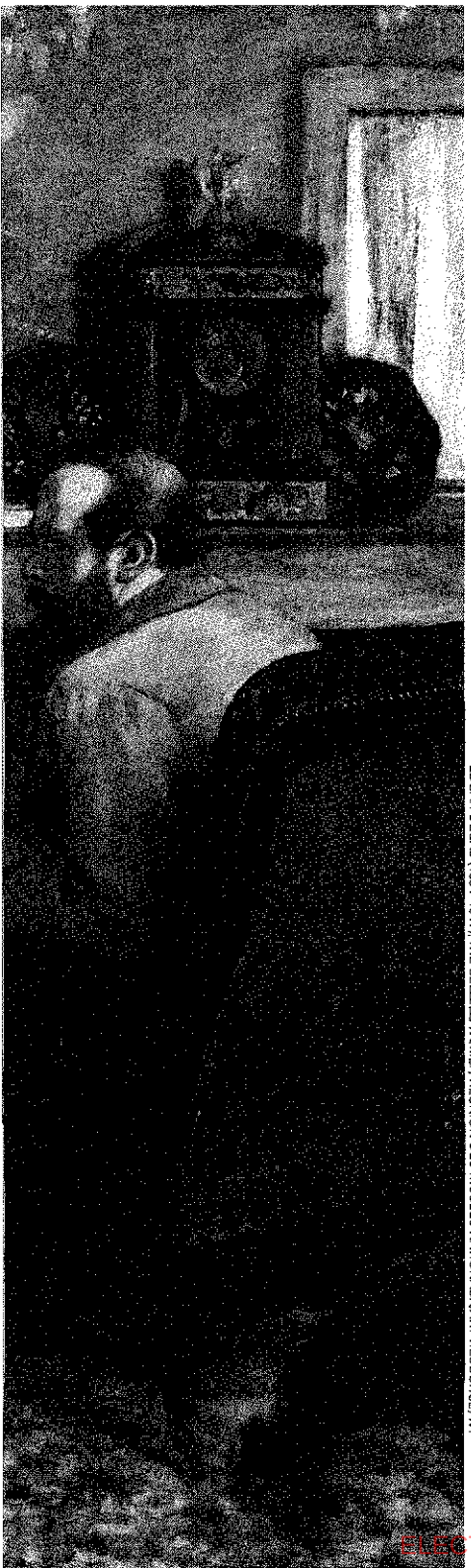

EDGAR DEGAS (1834–1917), *THE BELLELLI FAMILY*, RÉUNION DES MUSÉES NATIONAUX/ART RESOURCE, NY

even into those spheres where it is not culture but nature that determines what we do, we deceive ourselves into accepting—but with anxiety—a situation so novel that our ancestors never even thought to guard against it: the situation in which men and women are exchangeable in all their social roles and all their spheres of action.

It seems to me, however, that we do our children a disservice if we fail to acknowledge that their sexual nature sets them from the beginning on different paths. We should learn not to deny sex but to idealize it—to set before our children an image of the good man and the good woman, and to teach them to imitate what can be loved and admired. Even without the old division of roles, we can envisage alternative forms of role-playing that serve a comparable function—that rescue sex from animal appetite and make it the foundation of a lasting commitment.

Children, in their innocence, have an inkling of this. Sam with his trowel is idealizing himself; just as Lucy will idealize herself as she reads stories to her dolls and tends their fictitious ailments. Idealization is natural to human beings; for it is the process whereby they try to make themselves lovable and to live in the only security that our life provides. In our marriage vows, Sophie and I were making the same attempt. We knew the fickle lot of the human animal; we knew that married life would be fraught with temptations and frustrations. But we knew also that those things are not the only reality. We become fully human when we aim to be more than human; it is by living in the light of an ideal that we live with our imperfections. That is the deep reason why a vow can never be reduced to a contract: the vow is a pledge to the ideal light in you; a contract is signed by your self-interested shadow.

You do no service to a child by preparing him for the lower life—the life of the state-produced animal. Happiness comes through ideals, and it is only by idealizing each other that people can really fall in love. Such is the lesson that Sophie and I draw from our own experience, and we are surely not unique in this but normal human beings. The strange superstition has arisen in the Western world that we can start all over again, remaking human nature, human society, and the possibilities of happiness, as though the knowledge and experience of our ancestors were now entirely irrelevant. But on what fund of knowledge are we to draw when framing our alternative? The utopias have proved to be illusions, and the most evident result of our "liberation" from traditional constraints has been widespread discontent with the human condition.

It seems to me, therefore, that you should prepare your children to be happy in the way that you are happy. Treat them exactly as you would if your own ideals were generally shared. One day they will find, as we have found, the partner who makes it all worthwhile. Knowing this, we can re-apply ourselves to the education of Sam and Lucy, systematically depriving them, day after day, of the things our rulers recommend. ■

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A Little Touch of Mozart in New York

Stefan Kanfer

Amid the braying of car alarms, the thud of radio rap, the squeal and grinding of garbage trucks, New York's stony canyons and grimy streets seem a universe away from the magic and moonlight of Mozart's operas, with their harmony and balance, their moments of aching tenderness, their delicacy and subtlety, their urbane and transfiguring understanding of the human heart. But the world always turns out smaller than we think. And at Calvary Cemetery in Flushing, Queens, a stone memorial facing out toward Laurel Boulevard links these Mozartean masterpieces more closely to New York than anyone sitting in Lincoln Center, swept up by the music, could possibly imagine. For the stone tells us that buried somewhere in the cemetery—where, exactly, no one knows—is the man who wrote the libretti to *The Marriage of Figaro*, *Don Giovanni*, and *Così Fan Tutte*: Lorenzo Da Ponte, New Yorker.

Unlikely, yes: but Da Ponte's whole life seems like a total fabrication. Here is a figure who rose from obscurity to create masterworks with the greatest musical mind of all time. Here is a poet who abandoned his vocation to sell tobacco. Here is a Jew who turned Catholic and worshiped at Anglican services. Here is a priest who seduced women, a teacher without pupils, a famous Italian who became an obscure American, a reverse Midas who tried to go for the gold and lost money at whatever he touched. And here, too, no less improbably, is Columbia's first professor of Italian.

According to his argumentative, self-defensive memoirs, Lorenzo Da Ponte is always correct and almost everyone else catastrophically mistaken. "I believe," he writes, "my heart is made of a different stuff than other men. I am like the soldier who, spurred on by the longing for glory, rushes against the mouth of the cannon; like the ardent lover who flings himself into the arms of a woman who torments him." Alas, "I dreamt of roses and laurels; but from the roses I had only thorns, and from the laurels bitterness! So goes the world!" An over-the-top assessment? No doubt. Then again, this was an over-the-top personality.

It is in 1783 that the name Da Ponte first crops up in the correspondence of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. "A certain Abbé has promised to write a new libretto," the composer informs his father. "But who knows whether he will be able to keep his word or will want to." In fact, the librettist was better than his word. The first collaboration of this extraordinary pair was *The Marriage of Figaro*. How that marriage was arranged could provide the plot for a comic opera.

Lorenzo Da Ponte was born Emanuele Conegliano on March 10, 1749, in a little town near Venice. His widowed father, a Jewish leather dealer, took a second wife when the boy was 14. The elder Da Ponte adopted his young bride's religion, and in accordance with custom Emanuele was baptized in the name of the local bishop, Lorenzo Da Ponte. Young Lorenzo did more than genuflect to Roman Catholicism; he embraced his new faith with zeal. Quickly rising from acolyte to seminarian, he mastered Greek, Hebrew, and Latin, and became a fluent versifier in both Italian and Latin.

Church authorities recognized Lorenzo's lively intelligence, ordained him a priest, and promoted him to professor. These elevations would have sated any ordinary *arriviste*. Not Lorenzo. For him this was merely the on-ramp to the Main Chance. For an ambitious Italian of the 1760s, Venice was the high-voltage place to be. Fashion had created a strange democracy in that city. The highly stylized masks worn in the daytime as well as at night made a newcomer always uncertain whether he was saluting a duke or a nobody. And Venice was truly an all-night town. Well past midnight, large oil lamps lit up its streets, and its bustling cafés stayed open into the small hours. Moreover, military victories, weddings, signings of treaties, religious occasions—all sparked colorful, noisy ceremonies, making the place always seem an unending party. Hard for a lively young man to resist such an arena.

Without bothering to ask permission, Da Ponte took off for Venice, anxious to rub shoulders, as well as other body parts, with Europe's glitterati. Once there, the dashing young poet-priest

A scene from *The Marriage of Figaro*, which made the stir Da Ponte and Mozart intended.

THE GRANGER COLLECTION

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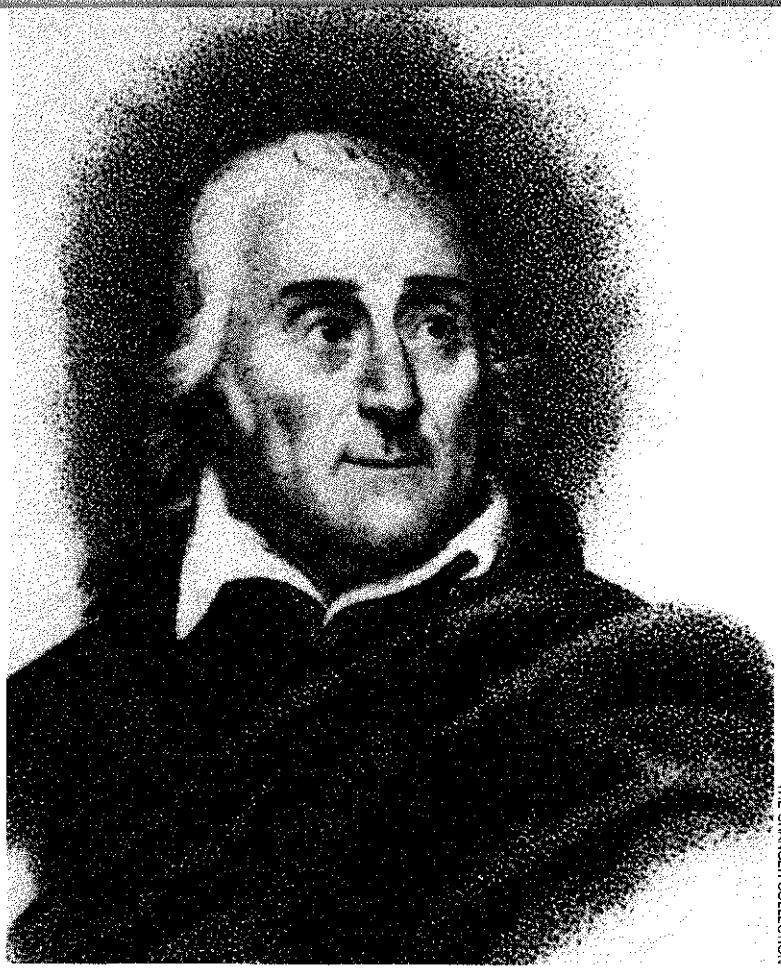

THE GRANGER COLLECTION

Between the two of them, Lorenzo Da Ponte (above) . . .

donned his mask, wrote reams of verse, gambled, met aristocrats, and absorbed the counsel of his new friend, Giovanni Casanova. ("The easiest way to overcome a woman's virtue is to assume it is not there in the first place." "Praise the beautiful for their intelligence and the intelligent for their beauty.") He gave ear to the music that filled the public squares from dusk until dawn. It was like walking onto an opera stage. "If two of the common people walk together arm in arm," wrote a contemporary visitor, "they are always singing, and seem to converse in song; if there is company on the water, it is the same; a mere melody, unaccompanied with a second part, is not to be heard in this city; most of the ballads in the streets are to be sung to a duo."

Da Ponte's life rapidly took on aspects of a libretto. Contemporary descriptions show him as striking: elegant in stature, witty in presentation, with abundant black hair and deep-set, glowing eyes. Confuting the adage, he was lucky in cards *and* in love. His memoirs recall the day that he loaned a fellow gambler a handful of gold coins; in gratitude, the man offered his stepdaughter's hand in marriage. Da Ponte the man-about-town magnanimously refused; Da Ponte the memoirist neglects to mention that he had already acquired a mistress. The woman's name was Angioletta Tiepolo, and she told prying neighbors that she was Lorenzo's sister. Masked or not, the couple's deception fooled few; behind her back the neighbors whispered of "the priest's whore." Even in a place of licentiousness, the notion of a man of the cloth involved with a *demimondaine* was scandalous. For a time, Lorenzo was obliged to lie low.

What finally undid him, however, was not sexual transgressions but political ones. Among the objects Lorenzo couldn't keep sheathed was his pen. He circulated a signed poem criticizing the corrupt Venetian government. In September 1779, orders went out for the arrest of a Signor Da Ponte for the crime of sedition.

Just in time, the prudent accused bade farewell to Venetian wagering and Venetian women and headed for the safety of the Austrian Empire. In Vienna, a well-connected fellow seminarian gladly gave him a letter of introduction to a composer at the court of Emperor Joseph II. "Friend Salieri," it stated, "my good friend Da Ponte will bring you these few lines. Do for him everything that you would do for me. His heart and his talent merit whatever help you can give him."

Despite the buffeting that Antonio Salieri has received from playwright Peter Shaffer, the villain of *Amadeus* was a respected musician, whose pupils included Beethoven, Schubert, and Liszt. Salieri looked over Da Ponte's portfolio of poems, measured the young man's ready wit, presentable appearance, and exquisite manners, and helped get him a job adapting the works of other writers at the Italian Theater of Vienna, the emperor's favorite cultural institution.

Before long Da Ponte was collaborating with Salieri and with a young Spanish composer, Martín y Soler. But not until Mozart entered the scene did the fledgling librettist find a creative soulmate. Never inclined to modesty, Da

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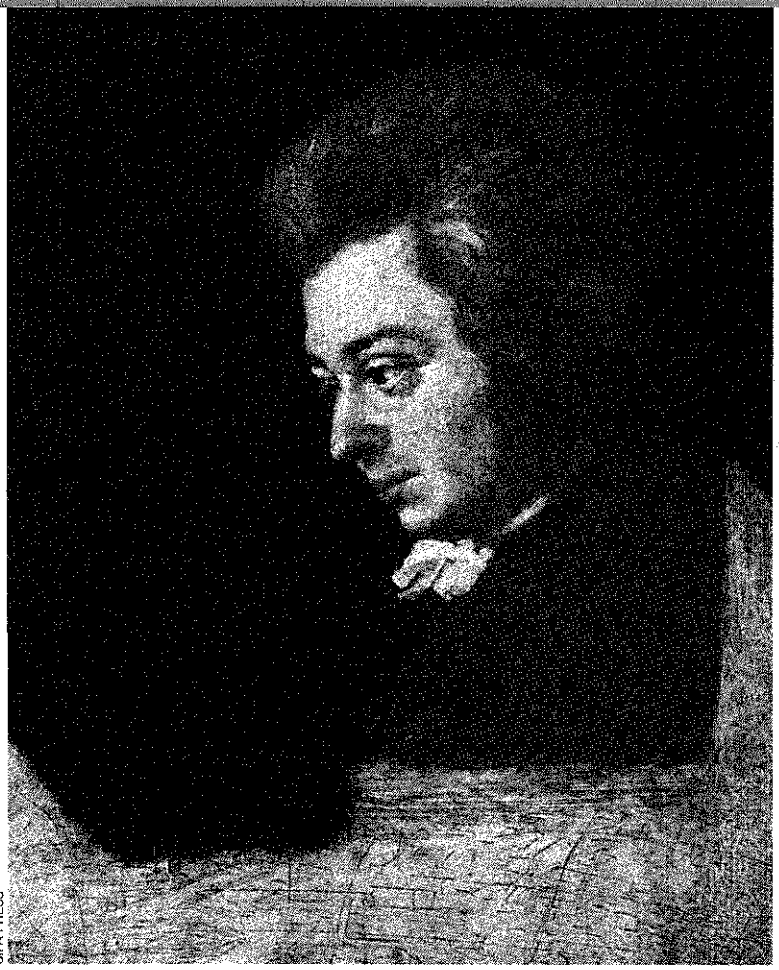
Ponte claimed in his memoirs: "Although Mozart was gifted with talents greater, perhaps, than those of any other composer in the world, past, present or future, he had never been able, thanks to the cabals of his enemies, to exercise his divine genius in Vienna. . . . He remained unknown and obscure, like a precious stone that, buried in the bowels of the earth, hides the brilliant prize of its splendor. I can never remember without a sense of exultation and satisfaction that Europe and the world owe in great part the exquisite vocal compositions of this wonderful genius solely to my perseverance and firmness."

Da Ponte's braggadocio was exaggerated but not false. Joseph II regarded Italian opera as superior to all others, and Mozart's rivals were quick to condemn the Salzburger *wunderkind* as incapable of writing arias, *buffa* or *seria*. Lorenzo lobbied long and hard to convince Joseph that Wolfgang Amadeus was the right man for the vocation of court composer. The emperor, who argued that Mozart wrote pieces with "too many notes," finally gave way.



SIPA PRESS

. . . and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart created three sublime operas.

Figaro was not a whimsical choice. Seeking to establish himself in Vienna with a major statement, Mozart suggested basing an opera on the Beaumarchais comedy not in spite of, but because of, its controversial plot. The play satirized the nobility and made a commoner—a haircutter, no less—the protagonist. Louis XVI had been so put off by this theme that he forbade a production on the French stage. "We should have to destroy the Bastille," he declared, "if a performance of this play was not to be considered a dangerous blunder. This writer mocks everything that must be respected in a government."

Though he felt less insecure than Louis, the emperor was mindful of Voltaire's perception that "we live in curious times and amid astonishing contrasts: reason on the one hand, the most absurd fanaticism on the other." Joseph was torn between clinging to the ways of his forefathers and accommodating the new spirit of the age that could not long be resisted without violence. At last, in 1786, he gave permission to the musician Mozart and the poet Da Ponte—a remarkable gesture, considering that the American Revolution was less than a decade old and the French one was less than three years away. But the emperor's approach was more than amply rewarded. His country remained stable, and his place in history gains luster because he sponsored one of opera's signal achievements.

The two collaborators reinvigorated the Gallic farce about a servant, a maid, and a count. The count plots to exercise his *droit de seigneur*, the right of titled men to deflower the brides of lesser folk. The countess discovers his plan and decides to teach him, in collusion with the maid, a lesson about marriage and fidelity, a lesson that belongs not to the *ancien régime* but to the new era struggling to be born—as do the opera's attitudes about the dignity and inviolability (the *rights*, one might say) of all persons, regardless of rank. The proceedings, despite their charge of new moral and political attitudes, unfold as a wry and effervescent comedy, filled with charm and improbability—and with music whose beauty and *joie*

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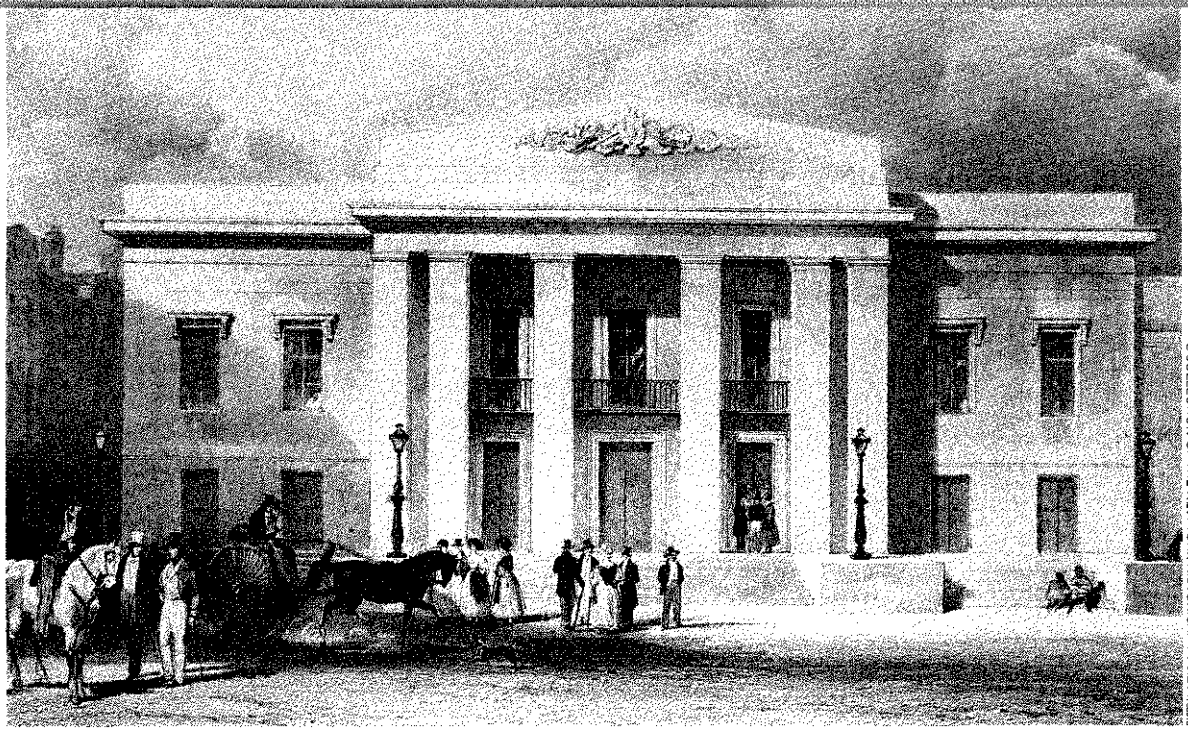

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Da Ponte founded the Italian Opera House—New York's first theater for opera—in 1833.

de vivre have since made *Figaro* the world's most frequently performed opera. The debut was a sensation; audiences demanded encores from the performers—and from the authors. Da Ponte and Mozart were only too happy to comply. Over the next three years, they wrote two more operas, one dramatic, one comic, and both immortal.

Their second effort was based on Giovanni Bertati's one-act comedy about the legendary Don Juan. Without destroying the original, Da Ponte darkened it. If, under the comedy of *Figaro*, the audience can't help recalling at moments that, in real life, such a situation would have turned out much less happily, *Don Giovanni* so inextricably mixes the comic and the tragic that some singers have interpreted the Don as a frightening monster of egoistic cruelty, and others have portrayed him as a much more comic embodiment of appetite and lust. As in *Figaro*, here too Da Ponte and Mozart added to their meditation on sex also a meditation on class. The collaborators' attitude is encapsulated in the Don's greeting to guests he has treated cruelly: "*Viva la libertà!*" It is a freedom he has used to take advantage of others, a freedom soon to be denied the ruling class, in events that unleashed, as it turned out, even greater abuses of freedom.

Doubtless Da Ponte had a specific voluptuary in mind: "I felt myself born for the fair sex," wrote Lorenzo's friend Casanova in his autobiography, "and I have been loved by it as often and as much as I could"—precisely the feelings of the Don, who declares, "I need women more than the bread I consume or the air I breathe." But Lorenzo must also have looked into the mirror when he considered the great roué, whose smooth approach and good looks make him a master of seduction. Many years later, the librettist rationalized his numerous romances by proclaiming that he only conducted one at a time: "I have never said to a woman 'I love you' without knowing that I could love her without any breach of honor. Often my attentions, my glances and even compliments . . . were taken as declarations of love; but my mouth never sinned, and never without the consent of heart and reason did I try . . . to awaken in an innocent or credulous breast a passion which could only end in tears and remorse." The fact that Da Ponte was a serial womanizer was only one characteristic that separated him from Casanova. Unlike the elder man, the younger one had to earn a living, and he pursued his task with diligence.

Da Ponte and Mozart fashioned an opera of psychological insight and dramatic power—with that rarest attribute of opera, an alleviating sense of the absurd. Because the protagonist was no longer merely a comic object, both playwright and composer felt free to give the Don big moments and long, expressive arias that rivaled any stage drama. But whatever comedy Da Ponte took away from the Don, he gave to his sardonic servant, Leporello, who comments wryly on his master's doings and demonstrates that in art, as in life, every tragedy needs its counterweight.

Da Ponte left no record of how he and Mozart collaborated. Did

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the tunes come first, or the lyrics? We will never know; Lorenzo was always more interested in recounting court politics than he was in describing the creative process. But a glimpse of the relationship can be found in the notes of a visitor, August Gottlieb Meissner, who was present when Mozart's friends importuned him for God's sake to finish the overture to *Don Giovanni*. With only 24 hours to go, the composer had still not written a note. Some sopranos enticed him indoors, then locked the room from the outside. Through a window, they told him that he would be a prisoner until he produced the required pages. Mozart, Meissner recalled, "broke into laughter, despite himself, as he saw the three women singers march up in line. They had shared out the long poles from the vines, which lay in a corner of the courtyard, and to each of them had tied the various requisites that the prisoner would need for the night.

"'Here are two lamps—and a couple of bottles of wine—and cakes and sweets!' they called out as the various objects were balanced on the edge of the window-sill. Da Ponte, more down to earth than the others, appeared with a rake to which a chamber-pot was attached, and cried, 'You'll need this too. Take it, divine maestro.'

"'A pity it's empty,' Mozart retorted, 'otherwise it would be the worse for you.'

"'Good night, Mozart. Tomorrow morning early we'll come and see if the overture is ready.'

"'Yes, yes, all of us!' the ladies echoed. 'Good night, dearest Mozart, good night! Set to work.'"

The divine maestro set to work with Da Ponte one last time in 1790. Their opera, *Così Fan Tutte* ("They *All* Do It") remains our culture's wisest farce. Two young bravos swear that their girlfriends love them with unshakable fidelity. Their cynical, worldly-wise older friend scoffs and proposes a bet: let them pretend to go off to war, and then return, disguised as Albanian dignitaries, to attempt seductions—of *each other's* girls. Then they'll see that their inamoratas cannot remain faithful.

The men accept the wager, and the results, as all opera buffs know, are a hilarious and poignant acknowledgment of human frailty. As the canny and tolerant older friend watches the endearing Fiordiligi and Dorabella fall for two "strangers," he comments, "Everyone accuses females, but I understand if they change their affections a thousand times a day. Some call it a vice, others habit; but to me it seems a need of the heart."

Così's double understanding—that from one point of view one handsome boy is interchangeable with any other handsome boy, while from another point of view the person we choose is unique and special and the only one in the world for us—goes to the heart of the human condition, and the fondness and comic forbearance and harmony with which Mozart and Da Ponte express it is irresistible and redemptive. Da Ponte and Mozart didn't wallow in *Weltschmertz*. They knew that life was filled with tragedy, sorrow, and injustice, but it was irradiated with moments of humor, glory, hope, and love.

Through the years many critics, among them Beethoven, have taken Mozart to task for squandering his gifts on what they considered "trivia." But the trivia abides; it is the very pinnacle of man's comic genius, thanks not only to the composer's matchless music but to the librettist's sophisticated dialogue and his credible and sympathetic characters.

Alas, the magic was running out for both men. In the winter of 1790, after *Così* had been staged only five times, Emperor Joseph succumbed to a fever. The following year Mozart, overworked and impoverished, died at the age of 35. In a double blow, Da Ponte had lost his noble patron and his peerless colleague. The new emperor, Leopold, smiled on new favorites. Depressed that his standing in court had abruptly slipped, Lorenzo grew wary, then resentful. Once again he became his own worst enemy. A letter in blank verse circulated, defying the authority of the crown. Someone attributed it (correctly) to Lorenzo Da Ponte. Leopold gave Lorenzo a few months' severance pay and fired him. He decamped to Trieste, where he argued his case in letters, carried on a love affair with a leading soprano until her husband lured her back, and waited impatiently for an imperial pardon. Passing through, one of Leopold's courtiers gave him the final word: "Seek your living in Russia, in England or in France."

Da Ponte plunged into despair. But when spring came round, he met a young woman known around Trieste as *la bella*

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inglesina. This, it turned out, was to be the love of his life. Ann "Nancy" Grahl was the daughter of a German merchant who had spent many years in London. (Scuttlebutt said that he, like Da Ponte, had been born Jewish; whatever the case, the Grahls now worshiped at an Anglican cathedral.) Nancy was Lorenzo's junior by 20 years. She was taken with this older man, worn smooth by experience and still a celebrity of sorts; he was beguiled by her youth and beauty. In August of that year, her father gave permission for them to wed. According to Da Ponte's lively biographer, Sheila Hodges, rumor had it—as Casanova later heard in Venice—that "Lorenzo Da Ponte threw away his priestly collar in Trieste, married a cook and fled to America."

In truth, Nancy was not a cook; she was the tutor to the children of a prosperous Dutch family. Da Ponte did not throw away his priestly collar, because he wasn't wearing one. And he and Nancy may never have exchanged official vows. His memoirs only state that they lived together "after social ceremonies and formalities." As for fleeing to the New World, that is what Nancy's parents did. Lorenzo and Nancy headed for London, where Lorenzo felt certain that he could recoup his fortunes.

The sojourn was not a triumph. He wrote comic operas and—a financial catastrophe—became an impresario. He became a publisher of libretti—his own and others'—and when that business failed, he operated a bookstore, which also proved a financial disaster. He fathered two daughters. With bankruptcy looming ahead, in 1804 he encouraged his wife to take the children to the elder Grahls, now settled in Pennsylvania, while he stayed behind for one last try. In 1805, as creditors circled, he boarded a ship for Philadelphia and never saw Europe again.

John Grahl, after profitably speculating in land in rural Pennsylvania, had come to the familiar conclusion that the business of America was business. Regarding his son-in-law, he asked himself: What would be a suitable occupation for a lyricist and playwright who had revitalized Italian opera, collaborated with Mozart, dealt with Salieri, negotiated with emperors, and jested with Casanova? Why, running a general store in the City of Brotherly Love, of course. Da Ponte drily comments on this period: "Anyone with a grain of sense can imagine how I laughed to myself every time my poetical hand weighed out two ounces of tea, or measured half a yard of plug tobacco for a cobbler or a carter, or a morning dram costing three cents."

Lorenzo was now in his late fifties and the father of two girls and three boys, the eldest 13, the youngest in swaddling clothes. Grimly acknowledging that buying and selling might not be his forte, he relocated to New York City. Here he planned to become an Italian and Latin tutor. That was not to be. New Yorkers held the Da Pontes at arms' length. Lorenzo feared that he'd have to throw himself on the mercy of Nancy's father, who had made no secret of his doubts about his son-in-law's competence.

But fortunately, one day in 1809, Da Ponte dropped into Riley's bookstore on lower Broadway and happened to overhear the proprietor discussing European culture with a learned young gentleman. They were speaking of Metastasio, and Lorenzo dared to interrupt. "I knew the poet personally," he declared. "And as for Mozart. . . ." He went on dropping names and telling stories. His mesmerized listeners begged him to go on.

The young gentleman introduced himself. He was Clement Moore, who would one day enter history (perhaps spuriously, a recent scholar contends) as the author of "The Night Before Christmas." Clement had distinguished himself by becoming, at 19, the valedictorian of his class at Columbia College—the college presided over by his father, Bishop Benjamin Moore. At the moment he was a dilettante, scholar, and occasional versifier on such subjects as yellow fever and the hazards of alcohol. Unlike most prosperous New York burghers, Clement had no bias against newcomers to the city, respected the work of foreign writers, and couldn't wait to introduce Lorenzo to his friends.

The Da Pontes became the catch of the social season. At the Moores' house they mixed with distinguished company, chatting of the Old World and the New. Nancy charmed the company by speaking English without an accent. Lorenzo, Mozart's co-worker—Wolfgang Amadeus

Comic or not? Don Giovanni's servant lists the famous lover's multitudinous conquests.

THE GRANGER COLLECTION

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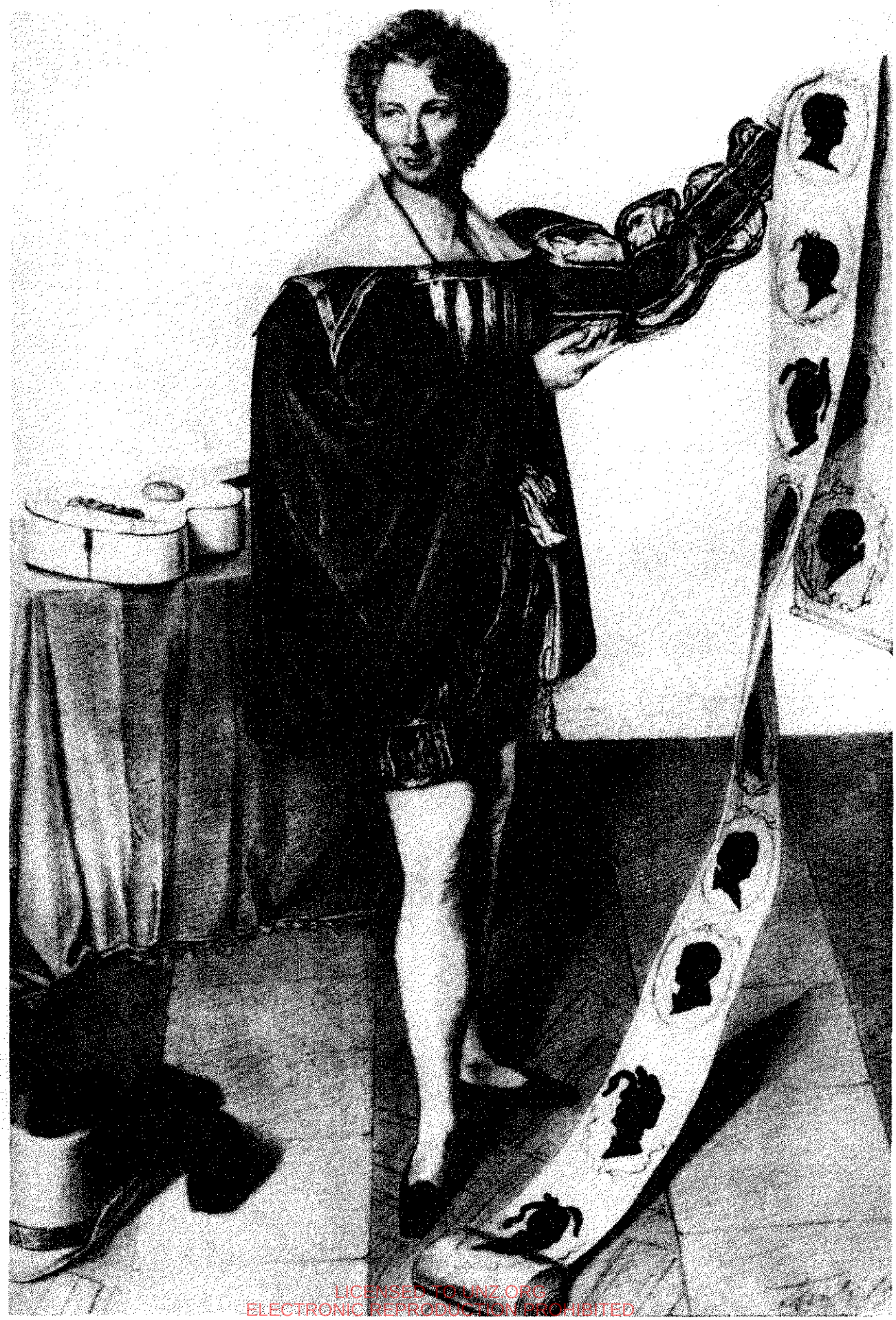

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Mozart!—went on about the extravagances of Dante, the conceits of Petrarch, the plagiarisms of Boccaccio. He quoted the Bible in Hebrew and Latin; he quoted Virgil, Horace, Dante. His eyes still glowed, his bearing was elegant, aided by the cane he carried as a swagger stick. His courtly mien and soft, sibilant accent were as irresistible here as in Europe—except that in America he used them to win friends rather than to charm females.

The trouble was that this enchanting couple was stony broke. Something, the guests decided, simply had to be done. And so it was. With their encouragement and a little financial assistance, Lorenzo opened the Manhattan Academy for Young Gentlemen, and, as it would not do for males and females to mix in the classroom, Nancy founded the Manhattan Academy for Young Ladies. With a position and an income, Da Ponte regained his footing. He not only taught class, but also began to import and sell Italian books. He built a small theater and staged Italian plays. He wrote poems, including one urging his fellow Americans to support England in its fight against Napoleon—the enemy, it goes without saying, of his native country.

But after several years of this, Lorenzo began to feel caged and restless. The tyros in the classroom were too raw, too . . . American. They knew nothing of opera and next to nothing of Mozart, the Italian court, poetry, the classic tongues. They must have found their teacher too sophisticated, too full of recondite allusions for them to follow. Lorenzo abandoned the classroom and the city for a big spread in Sunbury, Pennsylvania, not far from John Grahl's dwelling place. There he could get away from the glazed stare of students and relax amid quarries and waterfalls, deer and pheasant. To fill up the days, he palavered with neighbors and sold liquor and medical supplies.

But this too failed to satisfy. The woods would always be foreign turf to an *homme du monde*, and when New York beckoned two years later, Lorenzo changed his mind and locale yet again. This time he responded to an invitation from the ever-patient Clement Moore, who promised that he would recruit bright, interested pupils to sit at Da Ponte's feet and learn of Italy's great literature.

The 75-year-old Da Ponte was to roam no more. He became Manhattan's ambassador without portfolio for Italian culture, pointing out that in practically every city in the United States, "one finds the wines and grapes of Sicily, the oil, the olives, and the silk of Florence, the marble of Carrara, the gold chains of Venice, the cheese of Parma, the sausages of Bologna, and even the macaroni of Naples and the plaster figurettes of Lucca. Yet, to the shame of our country, there is not, in the whole of America, a bookstore kept by an Italian! All the books in this city, aside from the volumes I introduced myself, have either been brought casually by travelers, or have been sold at auction with other books on the death of some foreign inhabitant." The indefatigable booster established an Italian library within the New York Public Library (where the 600 volumes still reside).

In 1825, Clement Moore persuaded his father, the bishop, to make room for the 76-year-old Signor Da Ponte as Columbia's first professor of Italian. Lorenzo would be paid according to the number of pupils who took his course. In the first year, 28 students turned up. For the next 13 years, not a single freshman, sophomore, junior, or senior registered for Italian at Columbia. The philosophical Da Ponte took to referring to himself as *Professor Sine Exemplo*, meaning both an unprecedented professor and a peerless professor—a pun that contrasts in typical Da Ponte fashion his lack of success with his incomparable merit.

As such, he carried on outside the university, lecturing on Dante, composing more verse, translating Italian writers. The Da Pontes had become a shabby genteel pair, guests rather than hosts, with the 70-something Lorenzo still attempting to play the star at parties, *Sunset Boulevard*–style ("I *am* big; it's the operas that got small"). To define his importance, Da Ponte began to issue his memoirs in installments. These gave him a chance to drop names, review an adventurous life, and get in a few cracks about the ignorant press. "This one writes a three-page article in praise of the wrinkled throat of a eunuch; that one announces the arrival of an elephant and two monkeys in such-and-such a town; and a hundred similar things of no account; and in more than 20 years not one charitable writer has been found who has deigned to put down in black on a small piece of paper, so that the literary world, and in particular the Italians, may learn about it, what I have done in America!"

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In 1831, his beloved Nancy suddenly died of pneumonia, and Lorenzo sensed the chill of mortality in his own bones. There was still much to do. He borrowed funds in order to bring over a company of Italian singers. They performed many arias, including two by a relative newcomer, Gioacchino Rossini. But with no head for business, Da Ponte, as before, lost money, even though he hawked libretti in the lobby himself. Undeterred, he raised more funds from New York philanthropists, including former mayor Philip Hone, and oversaw the building of the city's first Italian opera house, a Greek Revival building on the Bowery. It was, Hone later noted in his diary, "the neatest and most beautiful theater in the United States and unsurpassed in Europe," with its boxes hung with crimson silk, its emblematic medallions and octagonal panels of crimson, blue, and gold, and its dome embellished with paintings of the Muses.

The opera house opened in the fall of 1833 to universal acclaim. A contemporary ticket holder recalled Da Ponte's "tall figure and handsome face at the opera . . . infecting others with his enthusiasm, and serving as a vital bond between the musical strangers and the fascinated public." That public had a short attention span, though, and over the next several years Da Ponte personally lost $4,000. His investors went in the hole for much more. (Despite an attempt to depose Boston as America's cultural center, New York City was still a provincial arena, unready for Mozart or Gluck; the first profitable opera house was not to rise on Astor Place for another 25 years.) The management changed hands, the Italian Opera House became the National Theater, a venue for legitimate productions, and three years later it burned to the ground. Given these circumstances, Lorenzo's rhyming reproach to his Yankee public, if ungracious, is surely understandable:

Yet to the hand which has
those treasures given
Ye have refused the cimbal and
the lyre;
And from this brow the laurel
crown have riven
Whose name has set the
proudest stage afire!

He pushed on, regardless. Now that Nancy was gone, the old man, *sans* teeth but with an abundance of gray hair and undiminished energy, invited young intellectuals to his run-down home to debate the virtues of the New World and the Old. One of his guests left an impression of those encounters: "It was my pleasure to dine at Da Ponte's place and hear furious discussions of Italian politics and delectable praise of composers and vocalists or pictorial critiques—transported by magic from Broome Street to the Piazza Vecchia or the Via Condotta. . . . Corned beef versus macaroni, was the problem he loved to state and to solve."

Still arguing and advocating, still trying to fuse culture and commerce, Da Ponte died of consumption in 1838 at 89, an extraordinary age in the early nineteenth century. Those who had short-changed or betrayed him were no longer on the scene in Europe or America—every man jack of them had passed on, he was pleased to note. All the same, Lorenzo could not claim to be truly fulfilled. Toward the close of his life he wrote: "If, when I was young, I had read the story of a man to whom the things had happened which have happened to me, and whose conduct was more or less similar to mine, how many mistakes I should have been able to avoid, the consequences of which have cost me so many tears and are still afflicting me so greatly in my old age! Thus I can and must say with Petrarch, 'I know my faults and do not excuse them,' but the damage, at my age, cannot be remedied, and all that remains to me is repentance."

What are we to make of Da Ponte's fate? Did he deserve obscurity? Didn't the librettist merely ride a whirlwind? Couldn't Mozart have set Euclid's *Elements of Geometry* to music and magically have turned the mathematician into a profound and lyrical poet? Almost two centuries later, Lorenzo's defenders could provide a definitive answer, when Igor Stravinsky pronounced himself pleased with the libretto for *The Rake's Progress* provided by W. H. Auden and Chester Kallman. It was, the composer said, the finest since those three works Da Ponte had written with Mozart. Maestro Stravinsky understood that the first-rate librettist must write characters and think music, a profoundly difficult task that Da Ponte did peerlessly.

Let his ghost take note: at last one charitable writer has deigned to put down in black on a small piece of paper what Da Ponte had done in America, as well as in Venice and Vienna—and to celebrate the achievement. Bravo, Lorenzo, bravissimo!

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Oh, to be in **England**

And Dying Thus Around Us Every Day

Theodore Dalrymple

The trial in January of Marie Therese Kouao and her lover, Carl Manning, for the murder of their eight-year-old ward, Anna Climbie, caused a sensation in England: not merely because the pathologist who performed the post-mortem on the child said in court that it was the worst case of child abuse he had ever seen, but because of the depths of incompetence and pusillanimity it revealed among the public servants charged with detecting, preventing, and responding to such abuse.

Perhaps it shouldn't be surprising that the competence of our public servants has declined along with our nation's general level of education; but in this case, the authorities conducted themselves with so stunning a lack of common sense that something more must account for it than mere ignorance. To paraphrase Dr. Johnson slightly, such stupidity is not in nature. It has to be worked for or achieved. As usual, one must look to the baleful influence of mistaken ideas to explain it.

Anna Climbie died of hypothermia in February, 1999. Her body after death showed 128 marks of violence, inflicted with leather belts, metal coat hangers, a bicycle chain, and a hammer. She was burned with cigarettes and scalded with hot water. Her fingers were cut with razors. For six months, she had been made to sleep in a black plastic garbage bag (in place of clothes) in a bathtub: sometimes she had been left in cold water, bound hand and foot, for 24 hours. She was emaciated to the point of starvation; her legs were so rigidly flexed that when she was admitted to the hospital the day before her death, they could not be straightened.

It was not as if there had been no warnings of Anna's terrible fate. She was admitted to the hospital twice during the months before she died; doctors alerted the social service authorities to the abuse she was suffering at least six times; and the police also were alerted more than once. No one did anything whatsoever.

Marie Therese Kouao came originally from the Ivory Coast, though she was a French citizen and lived in France for most of her life. She would return to the Ivory Coast from time to time to persuade relatives there to hand over their children to her, so that she could bring them up in Europe, assuring them a brighter future than West Africa offered, she said. She claimed to have a highly paid job at the Charles de Gaulle airport in Paris.

She used the children successively entrusted to her care to claim benefits from the welfare system, first in France and then in England. She moved to England with Anna, because the French authorities were demanding the reimbursement of $3,000 of benefits to which she had not been entitled. On her arrival in England, she was at once granted benefits worth, coincidentally, a further $3,000.

When the benefits ran out, she met the driver of a bus in which she traveled, a strange and isolated young West Indian called Carl Manning. He was almost autistic, a social misfit, whose main interests were bus routes and Internet pornography. She moved in with him at once.

It is possible that they then developed together the strange psychiatric condition known as *folie à deux* first described by two French psychiatrists in the nineteenth century. In this condition, two people who are mutually dependent and in unusually close association come to share the same delusion. Usually, the person with the stronger character and greater intelligence is the originator of the delusion, which he or she believes with unshakable conviction; the other, weaker and less intelligent, character goes along with it, because he or she has not the strength to resist. When the weaker character is separated from the stronger, he or she ceases to believe in the delusion.

Kouao—the stronger character of the two by far—needed Manning, because he had an apartment, and she had nowhere else to stay; Manning needed Kouao, because she was the only woman, other than a prostitute, with whom he had ever had a sexual relationship. When Kouao began to believe that Anna was possessed by the devil, Manning accepted what she said and joined in her efforts to abuse Satan out of Anna. They took her to several fundamentalist churches, whose pastors performed exorcisms:

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indeed, on the very day before Anna's death, it was the taxi driver who was taking them to one such church for an exorcism who noticed that Anna was scarcely conscious, and who insisted upon taking her to an ambulance station, from whence she was taken to the hospital in which she died.

The conduct of the two defendants in court supports the diagnosis of *folie à deux*. Manning was subdued and accepted his guilt. Kouao, however, kept a Bible in her hand always and frequently had to be removed from the dock because of her religious outbursts. She behaved as if truly mad.

HO/REUTERS/TIMEPIX

Anna Climbie died of hypothermia at the age of eight in February, 1999.

Two distant relatives of Kouao's who lived in England testified that they drew the attention of the welfare authorities to Anna's condition. Nothing happened. A babysitter who looked after Anna when Kouao found work was so worried by her general condition, her incontinence of urine, and the marks on her skin, that she took her to a hospital. There, Kouao managed to persuade an experienced doctor that Anna's main problem was scabies, from which everything else about her followed. Kouao claimed that the marks on her skin were the result of her own scratching to relieve the irritation of scabies.

Nine days later, however, Kouao herself took Anna to another hospital. There she claimed that the scalds from hot water to the child's head had been caused by Anna's having poured the water over herself in her frantic attempts to relieve the itching of scabies. This time, however, the doctors and nurses were not deceived. Not only did they note her injuries, but also her state of malnutrition and the gross discrepancy between the rags she was wearing and the immaculate smartness of the woman they assumed to be her mother. She ate ravenously, as if unaccustomed to plentiful food—as indeed she was. Hospital staff noted that she became incontinent at the prospect of this woman's visits to the hospital, and a nurse reported that she stood at attention and trembled when Kouao arrived.

The doctor in charge of the case duly informed the social worker and the police of her well-founded suspicions. The social worker and the policewoman deputed to the case, both of them black themselves, dismissed these suspicions out of hand, however, without proper investigation, once again believing Kouao's account of the case—namely that Anna had scabies, from which everything else followed. The social worker and the policewoman neither looked at the child themselves nor at the hospital photographs of the child's condition. They insisted that Anna be released back into the care (if that is quite the word) of Kouao—the social worker explaining Anna's evident fear of Kouao as a manifestation of the deep respect in which Afro-Caribbean children hold their elders and betters. The fact that the Ivory Coast is in West Africa, not the West Indies, did not occur to the social worker, whose multiculturalism obviously consisted of the most rigid stereotypes.

On discovering that Anna had been returned to Kouao, the doctor in charge of the case wrote twice to express her grave concern about the child's safety to the welfare authorities, who dispatched the same social worker to Manning's apartment, which she found cramped but clean. That was all she saw fit to comment upon. By then, Anna was kept in the bathtub at night and beaten regularly, with (among other things) a hammer to the toes. Manning was writing in his diary that Anna's injuries were self-inflicted, a consequence of her "witchcraft."

The social worker and the policewoman never went back. They feebly pleaded fear of catching scabies from Anna. Finally, Kouao

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visited the social worker and claimed that Manning was sexually abusing Anna, withdrawing the claim soon afterward. The social worker and the policewoman assumed that the claim was just a ploy on Kouao's part to obtain more spacious accommodation for herself, and their investigations evidently did not involve examining Anna.

Two months later, Anna was dead.

The case naturally provoked a lot of commentary, much of it beside the point. The social worker and the policewoman had been made into scapegoats, correspondents to the *Guardian*—the great organ of left-liberal thinking in Britain—suggested; the real problem was a lack of resources: social workers were too overworked and poorly paid to do their job properly. It is amazing how anything can be turned these days into a pay claim.

A former social worker, however, wrote to the *Guardian* and suggested that ideology, particularly in the training of social workers, was the fundamental problem. Here, of course, he went to the heart of the matter. The theme of race, and official attitudes toward it, ran through the Anna Climbie case like a threnody.

So rapidly has political correctness pervaded our institutions that today virtually no one can keep a clear head about race. The institutions of social welfare are concerned to the point of obsession with race. Official anti-racism has given to racial questions a cardinal importance that they never had before. Welfare agencies divide people into racial groups for statistical purposes with a punctiliousness I have not experienced since I lived, briefly, in apartheid South Africa a quarter of a century ago. It is no longer possible, or even thought desirable, for people involved in welfare services to do their best on a case-by-case basis, without (as far as is humanly feasible) racial bias: indeed, not long ago I received an invitation from my hospital to participate in a race-awareness course, which was based upon the assumption that the worst and most dangerous kind of racist was the doctor who deluded himself that he treated all patients equally, to the best of his ability. At least the racial awareness course was not (yet) compulsory: a lawyer friend of mine, elevated recently to the bench, was obliged to go through one such exercise for newly appointed judges, and was holed up for a weekend in a wretched provincial hotel with accusatory representatives of every major "community." Come the final dinner, a Muslim representative refused to sit next to one of the newly appointed judges because he was Jewish.

The outcome of the Anna Climbie case would almost certainly not have been different had the policeman and the social worker at its center been white, but the reasons for the outcome would have been slightly different. As blacks who represented authority—in a society in which all serious thinkers believe oppressed Black to be in permanent struggle with oppressing White—these functionaries had joined forces with the aggressor, at least in the minds of those who believe in such simple-minded dichotomies. Under the circumstances, it would hardly be surprising if they exhibited, when dealing with other black people, a reluctance to enforce regulations with vigor, for fear of appearing to be Uncle Toms, doing the white man's work for him. In a world divided into Them and Us (and it would have been difficult, given the temper of the times, for the social worker and the policewoman to have escaped this way of thinking altogether), We are indissolubly united against Them: therefore, if one of us treats another one of us badly, it is a scandal that we must conceal for our own collective good. A black African friend of mine, who had been a refugee in Zambia, once published an article in which he exposed the corruption of the regime there. His African friends told him that, while nothing he said in the article was untrue, he should not have published it, because it exposed Africa's dirty linen to the racist gaze of Europeans.

In other words, the social worker and the policewoman believed Marie Therese Kouao because they wanted to avoid having to take action against a black woman, for fear of appearing too "white" in the eyes of other blacks. Thus, they resorted to the preposterous rationalizations that the Ivory Coast is an island in the West Indies and that West Indian children stand at attention when their mothers visit them in the hospital.

The white doctor who was taken in by Kouao's ridiculous story of scabies (a diagnosis contradicted

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both by a dermatologist at the time and at post-mortem) was afraid to appear too harsh in her assessment of Kouao, to avoid the accusation, so easily made in these times of easy outrage, of being a racist. Had she not affected to believe Kouao, she would have had to take action to protect Anna, at the risk of Kouao's accusing her of being racially motivated. And since (to quote another memo from my hospital) "racial harassment is that action which is perceived by the victim to be such," it seemed safer to leave Kouao to her coat hangers, hammers, boiling water, and so forth. It is for this reason, also, that the outcome of the case would have been no different had the social worker and the policewoman been white: their fears would have been different from those of their black colleagues, but the ultimate effects of those fears would have been the same.

Kouao, Manning, and Anna Climbie were treated not as individual human beings but as members of a collectivity: a purely theoretical collectivity, moreover, whose correspondence to reality was extremely slight. No out-and-out racist could have suggested a less flattering picture of the relations between black children and black adults than that which the social worker and the policewoman appeared to accept as normal in the case of Kouao and Anna Climbie. And had the first doctor, the social worker, and the policewoman been less fixated on the problem of race and more concerned to do their best on a case-by-case basis, Anna Climbie would still have been alive, and Kouao and Manning would be spending less of their lives in prison.

I have seen such "racial awareness"—the belief that racial considerations trump all others—often enough. A little while ago I was asked to stand in for a doctor who was going on prolonged leave and who was well known for his ideological sympathy for blacks of Jamaican origin. For him, the high rates both of imprisonment and psychosis of young Jamaican males are evidence of what has come to be known in England, since a notorious official report into the conduct of London's Metropolitan Police, as "institutionalized racism."

A nurse asked me to visit one of the doctor's patients, a young black man living in a terraced house near the hospital. He had a long history of psychosis and was refusing to take his medication. I read his hospital notes and went to his house.

When I arrived, his next-door neighbor, a middle-aged black man, said, "Doctor, you've got to do something; otherwise someone's going to be killed." The young man, floridly mad, believed that he had been cheated by his family of an inheritance that would have made him extremely rich.

Only later did I learn of this young man's history of violence. The last time the doctor for whom I was standing in visited the home, the young man chased him away, wielding a machete. The young man had attacked several of his relatives and had driven his mother out of the house, which she owned. She had been obliged by his threats to seek accommodation elsewhere.

None of his propensity to violence, not even the incident with the machete, appeared in the medical notes. The doctor felt that to record the incidents would "stigmatize" the patient and add to the harm he chronically suffered as a member of an already stigmatized group. Furthermore, to treat him against his will for his dangerous madness—which English law permits—would simply be to swell the already excessive numbers of young black men requiring such compulsory treatment for psychoses caused (my colleague would say) by English racism.

No such delicacy of feeling was wasted upon the young man's mother, however, she who had spent many blameless years as a nurse, paying for the house from which her son had now driven her. Sympathy went out only to the son, who fitted the mold of someone in need of protection from an uncomprehending and hostile society. The fact that, if no one intervened, he might well kill or seriously injure someone and end up in an institution for the criminally insane for life was of no particular concern. My colleague would interpret it as further evidence of the oppressive, racist nature of society, and of the need to treat such as he with even more delicacy of feeling. There are no episodes from which the wrong conclusions cannot be drawn.

Even I, despite my staunch opposition to racialized thinking or actions, have found it difficult

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to resist the spirit of the age entirely. One of the worst mistakes I ever made was because I allowed myself to give consideration to race, where none should have been given.

A young black man, who still lived with his mother, began to withdraw, as if into a shell. Never very communicative or outgoing, he continued to work but not to speak. On one occasion, he did speak to his mother—about the disposal of his belongings if he should die.

One day, his mother returned to find the house barricaded. Her son was inside, having propped furniture against the doors and windows. His mother called the fire department, who had difficulty entering. They found the son unconscious, with his wrists cut and blood everywhere. He had taken an overdose of pills also.

He had lost so much blood that he required a transfusion before the surgery to repair his tendons could begin. A more determined effort to kill oneself could hardly be imagined. I suggested to his mother that, after his recovery from the operation, he be transferred to a psychiatric ward.

At first, she agreed, relieved at the suggestion. But then another of her sons and a friend arrived in the hospital, and the atmosphere changed at once. You might have supposed from their attitude toward me that it was I who had cut the young man's wrists, barricaded him in the house, and nearly done him to death. My argument that his conduct over the past weeks suggested that he had become mentally disturbed in some way that required further investigation, and that he was in grave danger of killing himself, was called racist: I wouldn't have argued thus if my patient had been white. The hospital was racist; the doctors were racist; I in particular was racist.

Unfortunately, the mother, with whom my relations until the arrival of the two other men had been cordial, now took their part. Under no circumstances would she allow her son to go to a psychiatric ward, where they routinely (and purposely) drugged young black men to death. The brother and the friend warned me that if I insisted, they would get their friends to create a disturbance in the hospital.

The law allowed me to overrule the young man's mother, brother, and friend, but the scene was becoming ugly. I arranged to meet them the following day, in the hope that their attitude was but a manifestation of passing anxiety, but by then their attitude had hardened. I caved in: but before doing so, I made the mother sign a statement that I had warned her of the consequences of refusing further investigation and treatment of her son, for which she would hold neither me nor the hospital responsible. The document was of no legal validity whatsoever; whatever force it had was strictly moral.

I did not quite give up. I sent a nurse to the young man's home, but she was several times denied entry on the grounds that her (racist) services were not required. A few weeks later, the young man killed himself by hanging.

At least the family did not have the gall to sue me for not having invoked the full force of the law (as, on reflection, I should have). They did not argue that I had failed to hospitalize him against his will for racist reasons, not caring about the fate of a mere black man—an argument that doubtless would have struck some people as entirely plausible. Indeed, I did not invoke the law for reasons of race, though not for racist reasons: for had the family been white, I would certainly have overruled them. But I had capitulated to the orthodoxy that avoiding race conflict must trump all other considerations, including the mere welfare of individuals. For in our current climate of opinion, every white man is a racist until proved otherwise.

No one doubts the survival of racist sentiment. The other day, for example, I was in a taxi driven by a young Indian who disliked the way a young Jamaican was driving. "Throw that man a banana!" he exclaimed unselfconsciously. His spontaneous outburst spoke volumes about his real feelings.

But the survival of such sentiment hardly requires or justifies the presumption that all public services are inherently and malignantly racist, and that therefore considerations of racial justice should play a bigger part in the provision of services than considerations of individual need. In this situation, black and white are united by their own kind of *folie à deux*, the blacks fearing that all whites are racist, the whites fearing that all blacks will accuse them of racism.

And while we are locked in this folly, innocents like Anna Climbie die. ■

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Letters

You're Right, But . . .

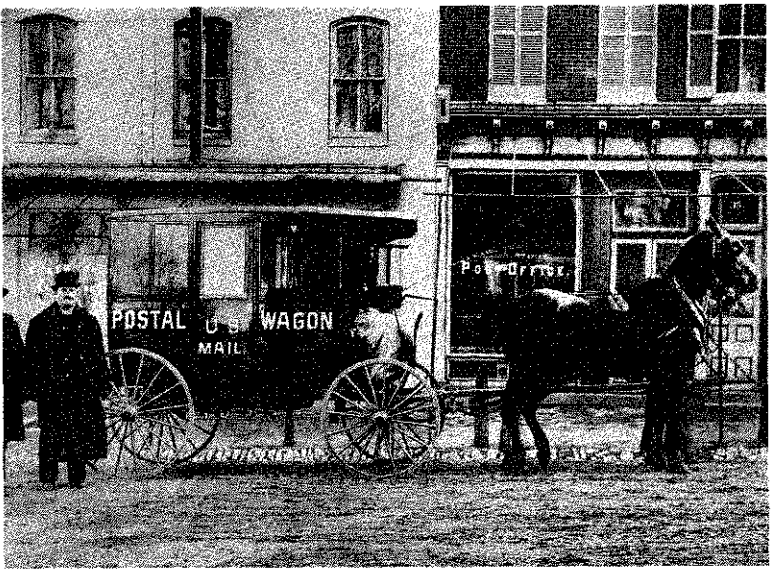
To the editor:

Although I agree with the argument that victimology is a problem for large portions of the black community, I believe the point can be made without the vehemence of John H. McWhorter's "What's Holding Blacks Back?" [Winter 2001]. The anger apparent in his accusations is more likely to alienate people and exacerbate the problem than illuminate and produce positive change.

My background, experience, and outlook on life are different from McWhorter's. I grew up in the projects of Cleveland during the 1950s. My black parents grew up in the South and neither graduated from high school. But they didn't share the negativism McWhorter describes as characteristic among the blacks today.

They never discussed race: they talked about "good people" and "bad people." So I never went looking for racism; I went looking for good people—and what I saw transcended race. My parents talked about "blocks to achievement," but not about one group of people maliciously blocking the achievement of another. Life is full of obstacles—and yes, some obstacles may come in the form of other people—but if I tried hard enough, they taught, I could succeed. And in spite of the surrounding poverty—both material and spiritual—I believed them.

Because I obtained an M.S. degree and was enrolled in a Ph.D. program in neuroscience before the advent of affirmative action, I've seen the behavior of blacks and whites on both historical sides of the issue. And personally, I experienced more prejudice after affirmative action than before—from both blacks and whites.



BROWN BROTHERS

McWhorter would be far more effective in making his point if he used the *Yes, but* technique: Yes, racism exists, but that's no excuse for a lack of striving to achieve. Explicitly argue that "most blacks are too dumb to see that they are shooting themselves in the foot," and most people will not get past the word "dumb" (or words that suggest that) without shutting down their ability to hear.

Louis H. Porter
West Chester, PA

John H. McWhorter responds:

The writer is representative of the problem I mention at the end of my article: he agrees with my position, but is uncomfortable seeing it argued exhaustively in public. At no point do I write "most blacks are too dumb to see that they are shooting themselves in the foot," and I emphasize that victimology is an unwitting product of white leftism combined with blacks' naturally injured self-esteem. Mr. Porter was fortunate to come of age before the 1960s, when the media, the academy, and popular culture began to teach young black people that America was set against them.

Few blacks—even those moderately inclined—criticize black writers who cry racism as being too "vehement." The sidetracking of blacks' path upward is as urgent and distressing a problem as many believe racism to be. Too many black writers pad every criticism of the black community with two items of praise. In 2001, American blacks are strong enough to grapple with more honest—even "vehement"—analysis.

Section 8

To the editor:

I generally—though not *always*—fit into the old-style liberal mold, but I found Howard Husock's insights on the Section 8

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Letters

program compelling ["Let's End Housing Vouchers," Autumn 2000].

I grew up in a heavily white-ethnic, working-class South Philadelphia neighborhood—just the kind of place Section 8 targets because of its reasonably priced housing. The area was safe and clean when I was growing up, with both a Catholic school and a public school within walking distance of our row houses.

Recently, my father-in-law discovered that one of his Section 8 neighbors was operating a brothel out of her taxpayer-financed home—with her husband as pimp. My father-in-law was incensed. I think it's just sad.

Larraine L. Formica
Abingdon, MD

To the editor:

Howard Husock's criticism of the Section 8 program is thoroughly original, hard-hitting journalism. While it doesn't offer hard statistical evidence for the problems mentioned, the testimony from local officials is highly credible. Husock reports that 84 percent of Section 8 families are headed by single females. Low-income families of this type often have problems other than housing—and that's a problem *for* housing.

Husock's recommendation to switch back to time-limited public housing is consistent with this analysis. I doubt it would be politic. Still, programs that combine housing with supervision and oversight might achieve something.

Lawrence Mead
New York University

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Is Marriage Good for You?

To the editor:

It is common sense that marriages tend to succeed when the partners are prosperous, healthy, sexy, monogamous, sane, and nonviolent. Maggie Gallagher's statistics bear this out ["Marriage Is Good for You," Autumn 2000]. But for her to conclude that successful marriages *cause* these things, rather than the other way around, defies common sense—or speaking scientifically, utterly confuses correlation and causation. It's like thinking that playing basketball makes you tall.

Robert Rosenkranz
New York, NY

Maggie Gallagher responds:

When people hear that marriage makes adults better off, they respond in two ways: "DUH!"; and "How can a piece of paper matter? Obviously, this is just a selection effect." Mr. Rosenkranz belongs to the latter, skeptical camp.

"Marriage Is Good for You" rests upon an analysis of hundreds of studies, and it attempts to control for selection effects in two ways. First, it statistically "accounts for" confounding characteristics (e.g., race, income, family background, education). These studies tend to show that the selection effects in marriage cannot explain the large "marriage gap" in adult well-being. Second, it takes into account a smaller—but even more convincing—body of evidence consisting of longitudinal studies that measure the initial mental-health status of singles, and then tracks what happens to their indicators as they stay single, marry, stay married, divorce, and stay divorced over five- to seven-year periods. This body of research shows clearly that getting and staying married improves mental health and other outcomes.

How does marriage have these powerful effects on health, emotional well-being, life expectancy, and wealth? The mechanisms are not unlike those that economists use to explain why business partners produce more and are better off than sole proprietors—but because marriage is a whole-life partnership, it produces returns across a variety of life dimensions.

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NYPD Diarist

It's Rudeness, Not Racism

Bernard B. Kerik

Crime, police shootings, civilian complaints, officer corruption—all are at historical lows, giving the NYPD good reason to claim that it's more successful now than at any time in its history. Yet not everyone has a high opinion of New York's Finest. In particular, many of Gotham's black residents believe that the cops are racist. But I think they're mistaking something else for racism—something ugly, but entirely color-blind.

Two personal experiences illustrate what I mean. In 1988, two years after I joined the force, I became an undercover narcotics officer. To look the part, I let my hair grow down to the middle of my back, sprouted a goatee, and put six diamond studs in my left ear. Though my new look made it easy to buy drugs in Washington Heights, it led my mother to ban me from visiting her at work. One thing was sure: I didn't look like a cop.

One evening around this time, leaving my Greenwich Village apartment, I found my car broken into and my radio stolen. I went down to my local precinct to make a report. Behind the desk, a lieutenant, a sergeant, and a police officer were conversing. I wasn't looking for special treatment, so I stood there without identifying myself and waited for them to stop talking. After several minutes of listening to them enthuse over an upcoming barbecue, I said, "Excuse me"—big mistake. The lieutenant wasted no time in correcting my audacity, showing me the upturned palm of his hand and saying: "Hey! We're talking here!" Furious but outranked, I held my tongue and filed the experience.

Circumstances were different in my second experience. Since becoming police commissioner in August, I've regularly gone out on the streets to see how the cops are performing. One Saturday in February, I was riding in my unmarked car, stuck in a Times Square traffic snarl. I saw some officers standing around on the street-corner, and decided to do some field commanding. I asked a plainclothes detective in my security detail to roll down the window and ask the sergeant to come over.

The detective did as I instructed without identifying himself. I heard the reply: "We don't come to you—you come to us" (expletives deleted). I quickly told my detective to convey a new message: "Sarge, that's the police commissioner, and he says he's not coming to you." It gets worse. As I began to retrain the sergeant, who now had come running over, my detective whispered, "He's not the one who said it—it was the police officer." This floored me. That a police officer would talk to a citizen in this manner was bad enough; that a supervisor would create an environment where a subordinate felt comfortable behaving in this way—and then do nothing as it happened—was totally unacceptable.

In both instances, the officers had responded with inexcusable rudeness. But what motivated them? It wasn't racism: in the precinct incident from the eighties, all the parties involved were white and male; in Times Square, my detective was a male Latino, and so was the officer who cursed at him. No, what drove these officers wasn't prejudice but a warped idea of what it means to be a public servant. The Times Square cop said, "We don't come to you" when that's exactly what a police officer should do. And the desk lieutenant acted as if the stationhouse belonged to him and not to the community. The common factor in the two cases was arrogance.

Arrogance is hardly exclusive to the NYPD. But in cops, it can be particularly destructive. It tarnishes our image by leaving negative impressions among the citizens who pay our salary. Worse, it's easily mistaken for racism or sexism, so it can offend entire communities. After all, if a black civilian had gotten the same rude treatment that I did in the eighties or that my detective did a few months ago, couldn't it easily seem like bigotry? Cops are particularly susceptible to arrogance, since the public really has invested them with authority, and given them guns to back it up.

That's why it's so crucial for commanders to make sure that it's always kept firmly in check. A police officer has to be many things—a crime fighter, a street lawyer, even a marriage counselor. But above all, a cop works for the people. When officers lose sight of this, the resulting harm can wipe out other accomplishments. We can make a neighborhood safer than it's been in a lifetime, organize youth events, and talk endlessly about community partnerships. But if we can't treat citizens with civility and respect, no matter what, we will never win their support. ■

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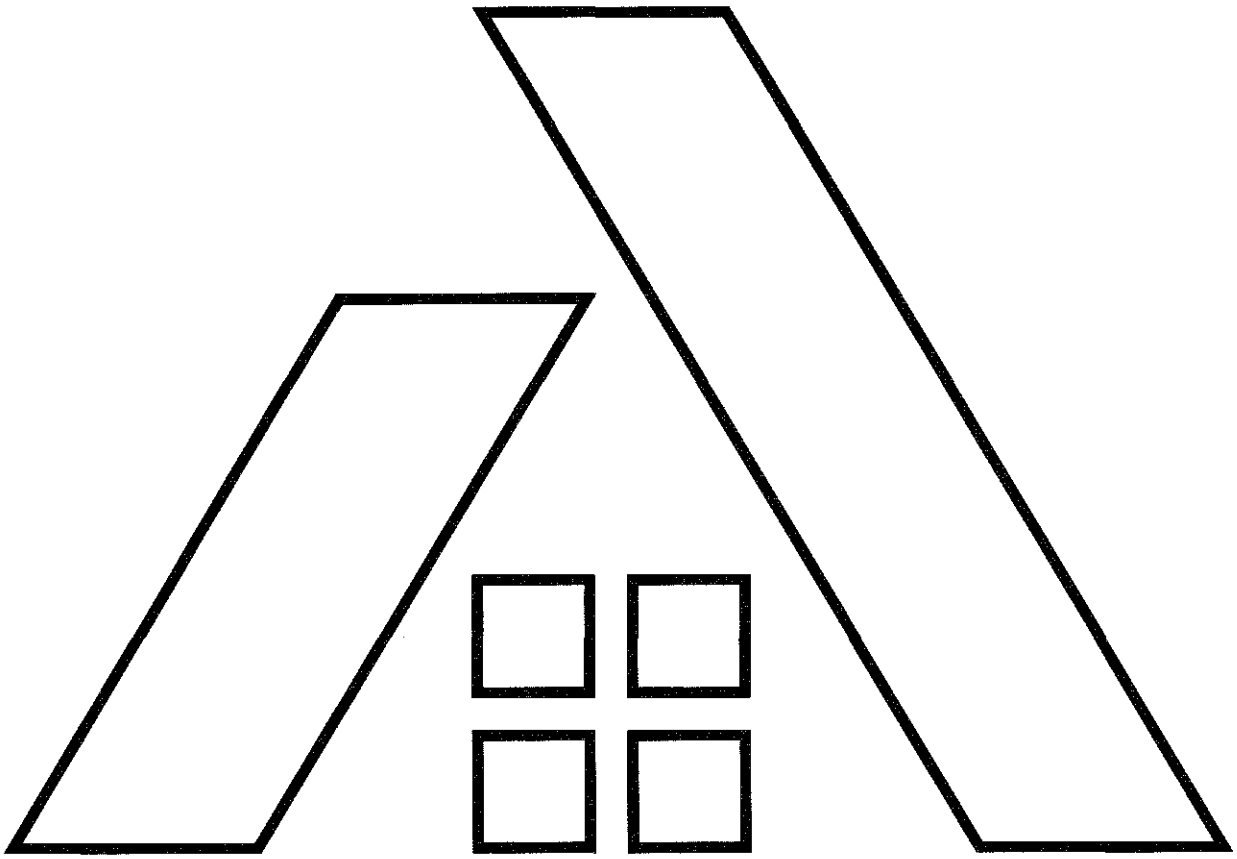

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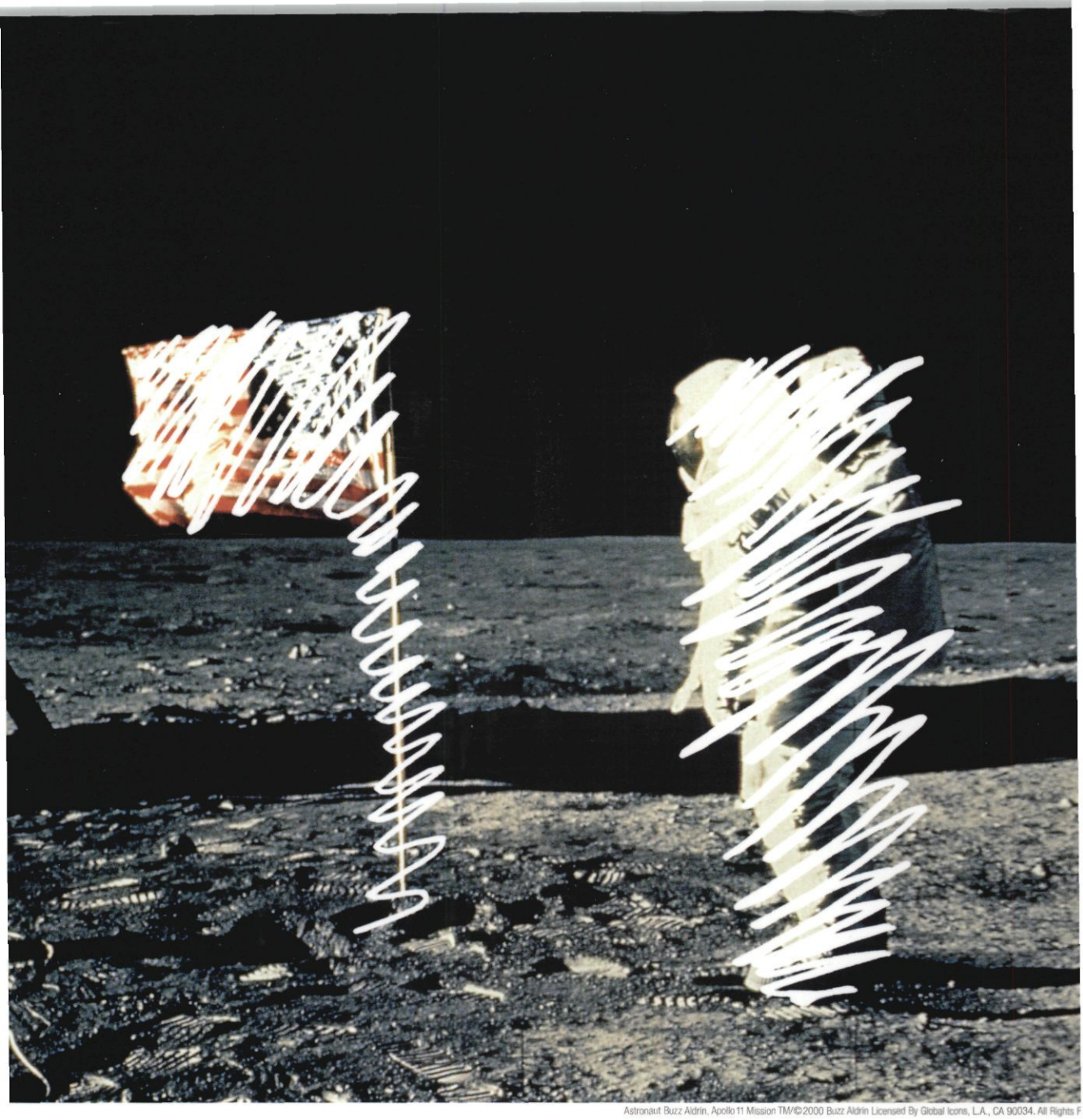

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